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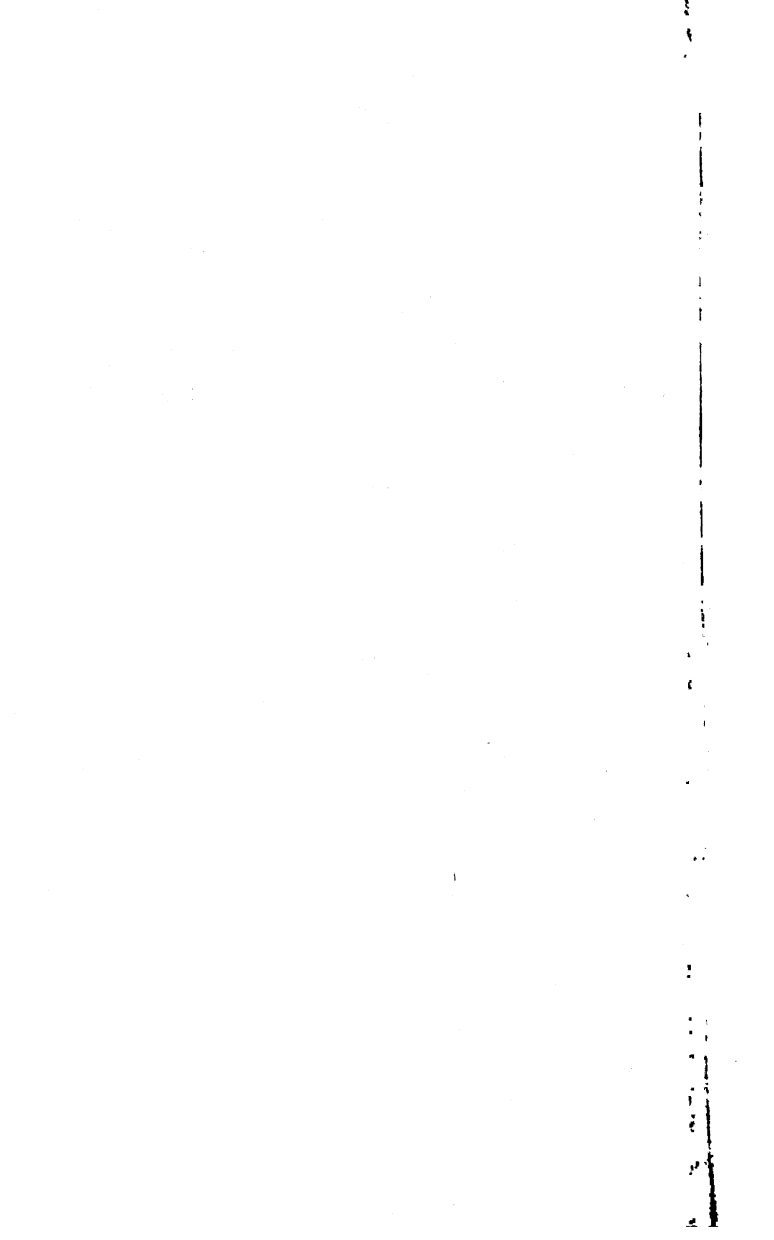
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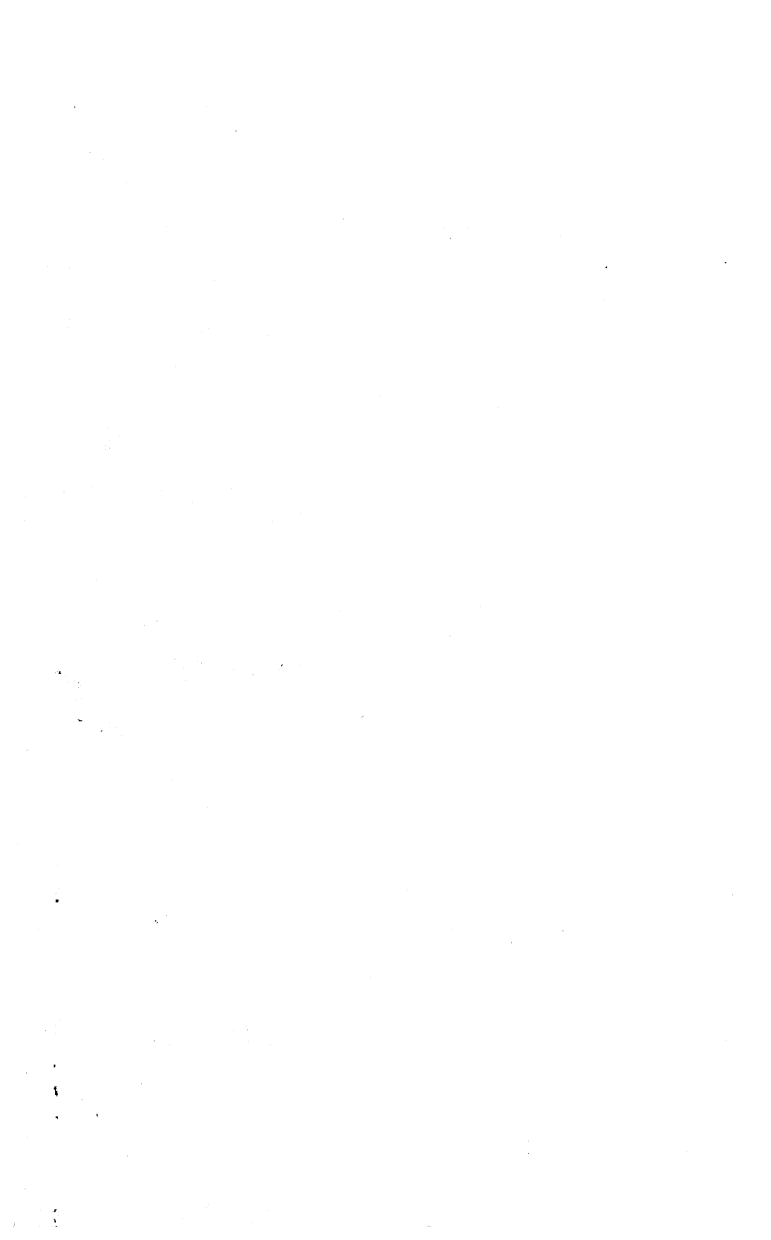
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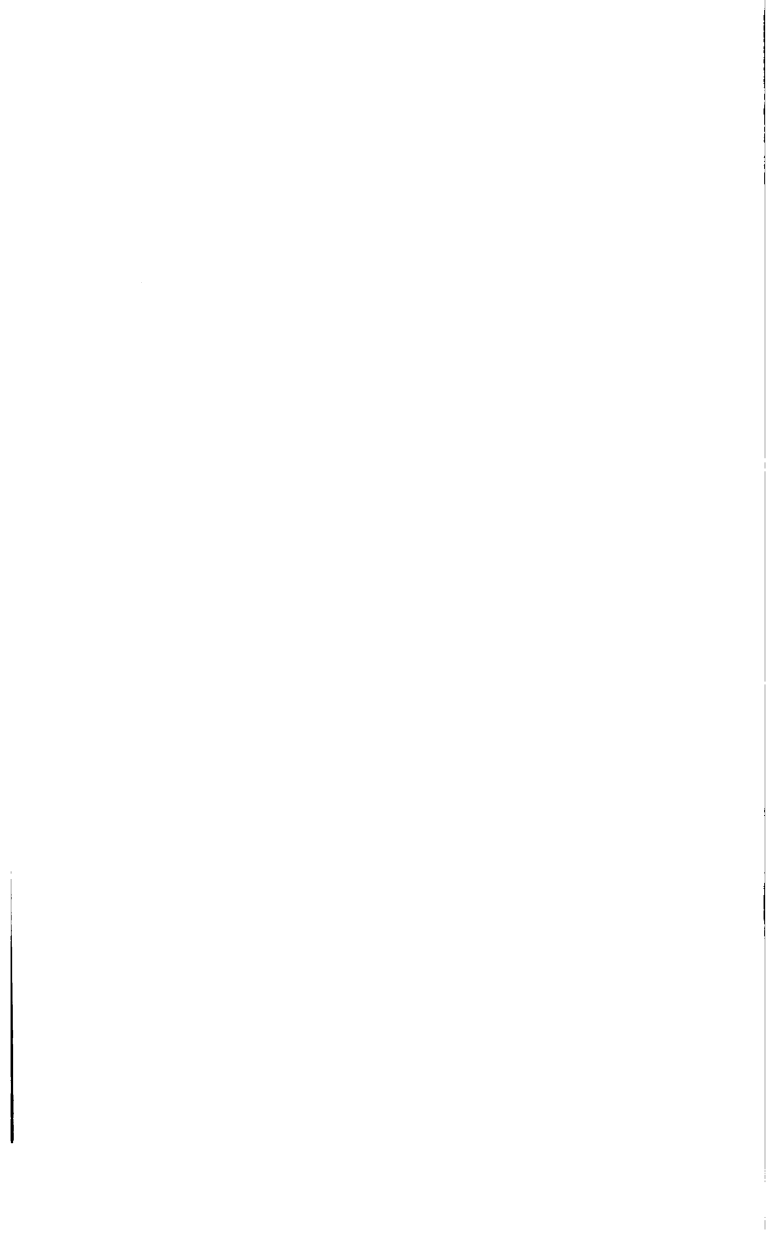
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A Group of Old Authors



A Group of ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ Old Authors

BY

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**THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY
OF
GEORGE ROHRER BOWMAN**

Preface

THE studies contained in this volume endeavor to add to popular knowledge of older European literature, by giving detailed illustrations of its condition at several periods between the sixth and the sixteenth centuries. It is believed that the material, although in part unfamiliar, will be of interest to readers of both English and continental writers. The papers were prepared originally as academic studies, then adapted and used as lectures before popular audiences, and, finally, recast into their present form. The first two are reprinted, by permission, from *The Citizen*. The others are now printed for the first time.

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A Gentleman of King James's Day:
Dr. John Donne

A Gentleman of King James's Day :

Dr. John Donne

THE principle that "an individual who has both strong friends and violent enemies must himself be of strong character and marked personality," has ample justification in the person of Dr. John Donne; of the positiveness of his characteristics there can be no question, and, surely, there are few men upon whom such diverse opinions have been passed.

Many, before and since Carew, have praised him as enthusiastically as did that poet in closing his elegy with the much quoted,—

"Here lies a king, that ruled as he saw fit
The universal monarchy of wit."

Many, on the other hand, sympathize with the verses of Coleridge concerning,—

"Donne, whose muse or dromedary trots,"

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or, again, with Jonson's terse comment that "Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging."

Many, truly, will follow critics beyond appreciating his thought as quaint, ingenious, and elaborate, so far as to consider it unnatural, fantastic, and trifling. Some, imputing to the author lack of sympathy and designed ruggedness, call his work essentially unpoetic. Fortunately, but a few persons, although some there are, go so far as terming both poet and his work tasteless, unfeeling, violent, execrable, and disgusting.

His very staunchest friends of to-day can scarcely echo Ben Jonson's tribute to Donne as one,—

"Whose every work of thy most early wit
Came forth example, and remains so yet."

This was, however, the expressed opinion of Carew, Cowley, Crashaw, Walton, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Cleveland, Davidson, Bishop Corbet, Bishop King, Edmund Bolton, Endy-

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mion Porter, Heyde, Chudleigh, Dornelly, Mayne, and a number of others, whose opinions are no less entitled to respect.

The position which will do most credit to critical acumen, and will also bear a true meed of honest praise to Donne, is a medium one.

It must be acknowledged that his verses, on a superficial reading, seem like riddles made to conceal the thought instead of expressing it; but it is none the less true that a more careful study will always show wit, fancy, tenderness, and deep feeling. Although his lines will not allow themselves to be read in the liquid way which modern criticism insists upon for model verse, they have, in compensation, a deep and subtle music which adds true feeling to the thought, and a dignity and movement which, like that of Milton's verse, does much to replace the wanting smoothness.

Ben Jonson said, with much truth, that Donne was "the first poet of the world, in some things," and Dryden was, perhaps,

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equally truthful in styling him "the greatest wit, though not the best poet of our nation;" yet one may here bear in mind with especial profit Charles Lamb's warning against allowing some striking peculiarity, commendable or otherwise, in an author, to crowd from the attention other of his characteristics which may be less prominent. Remembering this, one may recall, without fear of too much emphasis, Lowell's estimate of "Donne, who wrote more profound verses than any other English poet save one only," as one whose work "suggests so much more than it tells, and works the more powerfully as it taxes more the imagination of the reader." "To open vistas for the imagination through the blind wall of the senses as he could sometimes do," continues Lowell, "is the supreme function of poetry." Lest, however, caution be disregarded and overmuch praise be given, it is well to bring to mind the abatements. This may be done by a quotation which, while

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calling for leniency of criticism by pointing out the difficulty of the problem which this paper attempts to solve, will also suggest the reason why the solution has been attempted. *The Dial* (Chicago, May 1, 1896), in discussing the first popular edition of Donne (Muses' Library, Ed. Chambers), then recently published, said,—

"Donne drew around him a cloudy something which keeps him forever to himself. And whoever may have penetrated within has been unable, on coming forth, to render a good account of what he has experienced. . . . Whoever can write anything which shall give a true and sufficient idea of John Donne, such an idea as will make the general reader of poetry understand why he is regarded as a poet of surpassing genius, may deem himself no longer an apprentice in the art of criticism. Donne is the most baffling of the minor poets. . . . A number of men have tried their hands, and yet no lover of Donne feels that anything adequate has been said, and those who know the poet still remain an elect number."

While a great many persons who have known Donne but slightly have not cared for him, and while to yet more he has been alto-

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gether unknown, the number of those who have been true, loving, and appreciative friends has continually increased from the time of Sir Henry Wotton and Izaak Walton down to the present day.

✓ This same Sir Henry Wotton at Donne's death, in 1631, began gathering material for a biography which he intended as a tribute to the memory of his lifelong and dearly beloved friend. Sir Henry himself died in 1639, and his task, scarcely more than begun, was lovingly and reverently taken up by another member of the coterie, the humble linen draper, who was the friend of so many great men, "good Mr. Walton," as people chose to call him. Sad at the death of his wife, his daughter, and his dearest friends, Izaak Walton went about seeking more materials,—Landor has thus pictured him in one of his "Imaginary Conversations"—and then gave them forth in such a form and with so much of himself that "Walton's Life of Donne" has long been

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considered to deserve, as a piece of literature, a place by the side of the "Compleat Angler" itself.

Henry Wotton and John Donne began to be friends when, as boys, they chummed together at Oxford, where Donne had gone at the age of twelve years. He went so early, probably, to escape taking the oath of supremacy,—the test of loyalty to the crown and the Reformed Church of England—which was exacted from all persons entering the University after sixteen. Such an oath Donne could not take, since all his training had been in the atmosphere of the Roman Church, of which his ancestors,—among them Sir Thomas More—had been staunch adherents even to the death.

In addition to the usual stories of precocity related of brilliant youths, it is said that Donne was commonly compared to Picus, Prince of Mirandola, that friend of Lorenzo di Medici who at eighteen knew twenty-two languages,

and at twenty-four discoursed upon every branch of knowledge.

Traces of Romanistic thought, which are in a number of Donne's "Divine Poems," have caused the composition of some of them to be assigned to this university period of the poet's life. It is possible that among these should be classed the sonnet "To the Blessed Virgin Marie," "The Crosse," in which the use of the crucifix is commended in Donne's most involved style, the word "cross" occurring in half the lines of the poem; and "A Litanie," following the order of the Roman "Litany of the Saints." In this place should also belong the sonnet sequence, "La Corona," where there is to be found the very characteristic description of Christ as,—

"That all which always was all, everywhere,
Which cannot synne, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot dye, yet cannot chose but dye."

The first of a series of "Holy Sonnets" strongly recalls, both in matter and in expres-

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sion, Michael Angelo's "Prayer for Purification." Another sonnet, which has been called by Archbishop Trench, "The genuine cry of one engaged in that most terrible of all struggles," suggests that "There is much in Donne . . . which . . . reminds us of St. Augustine . . . there was the same tumultuous youth, the same entanglement in youthful lusts, the same final deliverance from them; and then the same passionate and personal grasp of the central truths of Christianity, linking itself as this did with all that he had suffered and all that he had sinned, and all through which, by God's grace, he had victoriously struggled."

It must have been during or at the end of these three Oxford years that the change of feeling away from Romanism toward Protestantism began. The tendency seems to have continued during three more years of foreign travel and study of French, Italian, and Spanish, until it was well-nigh completed about 1592, when, after preparation at Thavin's Inn,

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Donne and his very dear friend Christopher Brooke lived, studied, and took their recreation at the law school of Lincoln's Inn. There is much to make one feel how severe must have been the struggle in giving up the old belief for the new, and it is probably right to agree with Mr. Grosart and others in thinking that, in the removal of the restraint of the Roman Catholic teachings, the emancipated youth erred in the other extreme by plunging into the profligacy and immorality of the period.

Of all of Donne's elegies,—the term is used not in its original sense of a song of mourning, but in the wider meaning of a light essay on an intellectual or moral subject—of all of Donne's elegies, but two or three are unsullied by grossness and, if the leading of the larger number is accepted, one must leave the confines of pure, honest, and decorous society to follow to the unclean haunts of the immodest, loose, and shameless. To crowd out from remembrance these evil years and their records,

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there is needed all the noble, exalted, and truly magnificent work of the poet's later life. While the very fact that he had been evil and later became noble creates a greater personal sympathy for Donne, the wish is yet strong that the dark years had been other than they were.

✓ The brilliant circle in which the young students moved included the poets, Ben Jonson, Michael Drayton, John Davies of Hereford, and William Browne; and the impulses which stimulated Donne to become a writer of satires came, perhaps, not only from literary studies, but also from conversation with these wits, from an innate sense of humor, and, possibly, from a dissatisfaction with life as he was seeing it.

Whether or no it is just to style Donne "the first English satirist," is still a mooted question, but, written between 1593 and 1597, his satires are certainly among the earliest in the language. They rank among the best of the

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period in their freedom from the common servility in following originals in the classic languages.

These satires,—there are seven of them—treat of morality and religion and the poor rewards of literary life, but especially of royal evils, court follies, and public corruption. A reading between the lines suggests that the author must have been, at this period, a vigorous, fearless, mildly cynical, yet usually good humored, man of the world. Sometimes the touches are clever and humorous, abounding in light raillery, in puns, and in witty allusions; at other times, when the subject seems to require it, there is shown a force of idea which is powerful and even majestic in its crushing invective. The results of wide and exact observation and of unusual modes of thought are expressed with such accurate figures and such finished word-fitting that the work abounds in passages remarkable in their aptness for quotation. This aptness for quotation is lim-

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ited only by the unexpectedness of the thought and the extraordinary compactness of expression, making it often necessary to read and re-read a passage many times before its content is wholly understood and appreciated.

Dryden may have had in mind this difficulty of understanding Donne at a first reading, together with his unevenness of versification, when he remarked that the satires, if "translated into numbers and English," might be much admired. Hope and Parnell so fully agreed with this opinion that they attempted the revision, but the result they attained by putting Donne's thought into smoothly flowing lines was not a happy one. Dr. Samuel Brown, of Edinburgh, can be almost justified in thinking that Pope "improved" Donne, as the sailor who had obtained a curiosity in the form of the weapon of a sword fish, "improved" it by scraping and smoothing away all the protuberances which distinguished it from any other bone.

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Together with the satires may be classed the epigrams, where the same characteristics of unusual thought and condensed expression are to be noted. One of these, on "The Anti-quary," reads,—

"If in his study he hath so much care,
To hang old strange things, let his wife beware."

Another brings comfort to the "Disinherited,"—

"Thy father all from thee by his last will
Gave to the poor, thou hast good title still."

A third, on "A Burnt Ship," shows the love of the antithesis at its height,—

"Out of a fired ship, which, by no way
But drowning, could be rescued from the flame,
Some men leaped forth, and ever as they came
Neere the foe's ships, did by their shot decay;
So all were lost which in the ship were found
They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship
drowned."

All along through the poet's life the lyric poems were written, and a number of them

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must have grown from these early London days. These lyrics, in more than fifty different metres, light, dainty, gay, and joyous, smooth and liquid, too, when he chose to make them so, whether working out original conceits or ringing the variations upon familiar themes, deserve all the epithets of charming, delightful, and admirable, which they have received.

Justly famous is the "Song," in lighter vein, with the verses,—

"If thou be'st born to strange sights,
Things invisible go see,
Ryde ten thousand days and nights,
'Till age snow white hairs on thee.
Thou at thy return wilt tell mee
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And sweare,
No wheare
Lives a woman true and fayre.

"If thou findst one, let me know;
Such a pylgrimage were sweete:
Yet do not; I wo'ld not goe,
Though at next dore we should meete.

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Though she weare true when you mett her,
And last so 'till you wryte your letter,
Yet shee
Will be
False, ere I come, to two or three."

There is much lightness as graceful and as
heartless as this, but there is still more con-
stancy and earnestness, as in the "Song"
which contains the stanzas,—

"Sweetest love, I doe not goe
For wearyness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can showe
A fyttter love for mee ;
But since that I
Must dye at last, 'tis best
Thus to use myselfe in jest,
Thus by fayned death to dye.

"Yesternight the sunn went hence,
And yet is here to-day ;
He hath no desire nor sence,
Nor half so short a way.
Then fear not mee ;
But believe that I shall make
Hastier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than hee."

We do not wonder that such verses as these

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should captivate all who knew them, and that John Donne should have become the poet of his circle, and this, too, in spite of the fact that his poems circulated in manuscript alone, being first printed in a collection only after his death.

This young poet, "imbued to saturation, with all the learning of his age" was, according to Walton, "of stature moderately tall: of a straight and equally proportioned body, to which all of his words and actions gave an inexpressible addition of comeliness. The melancholy and pleasant humors were in him so contempered, that each gave advantage to the other, and made his company one of the delights of mankind." Indeed, the cleverness of his conversation became noted, and his witty sayings were quoted far and wide.

Donne made many friends, among them persons elevated both in character and rank such as Lady Magdalen Herbert, mother of Lord Herbert of Cherbury and of George

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Herbert the poet; of whom he wrote so delightfully,—

“ No Spring nor Summer’s beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in one Autumnall face.”

Among the “Verse Letters” there are a number to various persons of prominence, all written in the adulatory vein considered proper for such addresses. Those, indeed, to the Countess of Bedford, the Countess of Huntingdon, the Countess of Salisbury, Lady Carey, and Mistress Rich, are stilted in thought and phrase. Similarly formal and studied is the letter to Sir Edward Herbert; but Donne’s verses to his friends the Brookes, to Sir Henry Wotton, to the Woodwardes, Sir Thomas Roe, and some friends whose names are indicated only by initials, abound in true friendliness as well as in sparkling wit. These more familiar letters treat of study, travel, life in country, town, and court, of youth and age, separation and meeting, of friendship, love, and poetry;

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and all in a somewhat formal way, which indicates that the pieces may, perhaps, have been enclosed in letters to the persons addressed. Some others, containing literary criticism, anticipate in conception our modern "Letters to Dead Authors," or "Overheard in Arcady." Most charming and delightful, perhaps, of all, are the verses to Ben Jonson and "To my very learned friend, Dr. Andrews, concerning a printed book which, when it was borrowed by him, was torn in pieces at the house by the children, and afterwards returned in manuscript."

The high grade of literary excellence maintained throughout all these letters stamps them as real poems, very far removed from the rhymed prose in some of the familiar letters of Cowper. These certainly were not written with the facility of ordinary correspondence, for they evince frequent references to the commonplace book, and such care in composition that a reading convinces one of the truth of

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the surmise that Donne was not a rapid, but a careful and painstaking writer.

There is always danger of discussing the "Verse Letters" at greater length than their proportional importance deserves, but some such admirable passages occur that quotations may be taken from them rather than from some of Donne's more ambitious literary performances. And these letters show in a manner different from that of any of his other works, the individuality of the author.

There is a Coleridge-like bit of description in "The Calm," when all the world was so still that,—

" in one place lay
Feathers and dust, to-day and yesterday."

Wit is frequent,—

" I have been told that virtue in courtiers' hearts
Suffers an ostracism and departs."

There are many lines which combine epigrammatic terseness with philosophic depth,—

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"Who prayerless labors, or without this prayes
Doth but one-half, that's none."

Donne's adroit originality of thought is nowhere better shown than by his mode of excusing himself for having praised so many ladies. The lines read,—

"And if things like these have been said by me
Of others, call not that idolatrie.
For had God made man first, and man had seen
The third daie's fruits and flowers and various greene,
He might have said the best that he could say
Of those fair creatures which were made that day;
And when next day he had admired the birth
Of sun, moon, stars, fairer than late praised earth,
He might have said the best that he could say,
And not be chid for praising yesterday.
So, though some things are not together true,
As that another's fairest and that you ;
Yet to say so, doth not condemn a man,
If, when he spake them, they were both true than."

In extricating himself from even so serious a predicament, it seems that Donne must be given the additional credit of being sufficiently sly not to exhaust his happy figure, but to preserve it for use in some future escape, when

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the creations of the first days might be made to pale beside the lovely Eve. One almost imagines him deliberately involving himself in a complication, that he might employ so clever an explanation.

Donne, now being made secretary to Lord Ellesmere, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, came still more into contact with prominent persons, and bore himself so well that duties of increasing importance were entrusted to him.

He seems to have been, as became every good courtier of his day, an ardent lover, and the somewhat unsafe practice of constructing from a poet's work cycles of poems illustrative of his life, may be indulged in, in the case of Donne's love lyrics, with comparative safety.

Such a cycle might begin with "The Ecstasie," treating of overwhelming love; with "Love's Infiniteness," of love more than the poet's heart can contain; or with "Negative

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Love," of affection which beggars description. In "The Expiration," a cruel separation occurs, the lover being obliged to go upon a journey. In "The Paradox," he is dying of love; and in "The Legacy," he wishes to send the lady his heart, but, upon opening his bosom, her own heart is found in its stead.

So far as the lady is concerned, out of sight seems, indeed, out of mind, and in "Love's Dietie," the poet bewails the sadness of unreturned affection and ventures a present. In "A Jeate Ringe Sente," he is still disconsolate, lamenting her lack of faith and exhorting the artist to complete "The Portrait,"—begun in happier days as a present for her—in shadow and dark tints.

In sadness is written "Twit'nam Garden," where the beauties of nature only increase sorrow to an agony of remembrance. The lover exhorts his lady, in "A Valediction of My Name in the Window," to allow the sun, as it shadows his name into the room, to re-

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mind her of his love, or prays that, as she opens the casement to converse with another, the sight of his name may recall her to constancy.

In "The Token," no ribbon, ring, bracelet, no picture, nor even letter is desired; the lady is asked merely to say she thinks the lover constant. All, however, is in vain as the poet had known it would be. He accepts, in "The Prohibition," her hate, as he had done her love, yet laments that she should so have requited his deep affection.

The mood now seems to change into a Browning-like feeling that it is better so to be, and that, while she is forever lost to him, he has been made nobler by having nobly loved even one so unworthy of his constant affection. This is evidenced in "A Dialogue between Sir Henry Wotton and Mr. Donne," where love is praised for love's own sake. The lover still keeps his lady's hair bracelet as a token, he will wear it, in "The Funeral,"

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into his grave, and until, in "The Relique," his bones are exhumed.

To all of these lyrics well applies Minto's comment that "In love, as in religion, there are three churches, the High Church, the Low Church, and the Broad Church. Love was worshipped in the Elizabethan age with elaborate rites and ceremonies, and "the poets were all extreme Ritualists."

One reason why Donne's love poems were so full of feeling was discovered when it was learned that, shortly before Christmas of the year 1601, he had secretly married the daughter of Sir George Moore, Lord Lieutenant of the Tower, who, as the niece and companion of Lady Egerton, had seen much of the young secretary.

Walton well said concerning this marriage that love was "a flattering mischief," for the enraged Sir George took forcible possession of the sixteen-year-old bride and, besides causing the young husband to be dismissed from his

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secretaryship, had him and the two Brookes, who were present at the wedding, imprisoned in the Tower.

Donne's own incarceration did not last a great while, but it was only after a long and troublesome suit in law that his wife was yielded to him. He tried for reinstatement in his position, but it was in vain, even after reconciliation with Sir George came, and there were days when the outlook justified the characteristic phrase with which Donne closed a letter to his wife, "John Donne, Anne Donne, un-done."

That the shadows of the picture were somewhat compensated for by a brighter side, may be seen from the true love in the many lyrics addressed to his wife during this time of unhappiness. Yet this very love intensified his sorrow at the misfortune brought upon her. He says, "I write from the fireside in my parlor, and in the noise of three gamesome children, and by the side of her whom, be-

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cause I have transplanted into such a wretched fortune, I must labor to disguise that from her by all such honest devices as giving her my company and discourse."

This seems to have been written soon after a half dozen years had been spent living in the houses of friends, and the Donnes had once more come under their own roof-tree in a small house at Mitcham. The poet's qualities were gradually but surely gaining him once more popularity at court, and his circle of acquaintances continually widened, until, from the salons of the great ladies, he came, because of his reading aloud and his discussion, to be gladly welcomed at the royal table.

New dignities, however, brought new burdens. King James, convinced that the church alone should claim such gifts as Donne possessed, steadily refused to confer any preferment upon him except that of the churchly dignity. Thomas Mor^{to}an, chaplain to the king and afterward Bishop of Durham, to whom

the poet had been of assistance in his literary labors, added his persuasions to those of the king; but Donne steadily refused. To Bishop Morton, one of many others who urged him to enter the church, he explained his stand by writing:—"I dare make so dear a friend as you my confessor. Some irregularities of my life have been so visible to some men that, though I have, I thank God, made my peace with Him by penitential resolutions against them, and by the assistance of His grace banished them from my affections; yet this, which God knows to be so, is not so visible to man as to free me from their censures, and, it may be that sacred calling from a dishonor."

Many poems were produced at this period; the king was further pleased by a controversial work favoring the Reformed Church, and in 1610, Oxford conferred upon Donne the degree of M. A.

The daughter of Sir Robert Drury, of Hausted, Suffolk, having died at the age of

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fifteen, Donne seems to have been employed to compose for her an epitaph. Upon this theme we have the elegy entitled, "An Anatomy of the World, wherein by occasion of the untimely death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury, the Frailty and Decay of the whole world is represented." This was printed in 1611, and in 1612 reprinted with an added second part, "The Second Anniversarie, or the Progress of the Soule." These elegies were written in the heroic couplet, and were the first and only considerable portion of Donne's poetical work published during his lifetime. Even these were issued with some reluctance, for it seems that Donne felt his poems all to be "fragments of one grand confession," and too much a part of himself to be spread broadcast.

An outline of the first of the four sections into which, with a conclusion, the "Anatomy" is divided, will show the peculiar and, at times, fantastic course of the thought. The

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world, convulsed with sorrow at the death of the lady, shaken by an earthquake, and racked by convulsive fevers; yielding to the many ills of sickness, finally perishes; and now, although the soul has fled, the poet comes to attempt what lessons may be drawn from an anatomy, or study of the dead body.

Sad lessons of mortality and corruption are to be deduced, for although by the walking of the ghost of the lady a sort of world is still retained, it is illuminated but by the twilight of her memory instead of the dazzling brilliance of her presence. This dreadful time when all is gone and nothing whole remains, is the dread consummation of the evils begun in the Garden of Eden. Compared with the early men, in length of life we are but infants, in size of stature pigmies, in understanding simpletons. All this has come to man,—once monarch of the world—since, in the lady's death, the heart of all is dead.

In the other divisions of the poem, it is

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shown how not only the heart has died, but also how body and substance, beauty, color, and lustre have perished in her death.

The "Second Anniversary" is in a similar tone,—That the earth has lasted long enough for a second anniversary of her death to arrive would surely be a proof of its everlastingness, but that the life which the world now has is as the inertia which keeps moving a ship which has struck her sails, as the convulsive movements of a beheaded body, or a lute lying alone which sounds by the snapping of its strings. The poet seizes the brief time remaining before the final dissolution to speak again the lady's praise. As a motto for the whole might be set the lines,—

"She, shee is gone : she is gone ; when thou knowest this,
What fragmentary rubbidge this world is
Thou knowest, and that it is not worth a thought,
He honors it too much who thinkes it nought."

[In the poem there are crowded, sometimes most incongruously, remarkable observation

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of the beautiful and humorous, bits of satire, references to the absorbing discoveries of the new science, side by side with figures decidedly unhappy because of their lack of taste. The very vigor of the imaginative, daring, and fantastic figures frequently deflects, from its main theme, the train of speculative thought which runs through the development of the whole. Yet, paradoxical as it is,—Donne is full of paradoxes—one of the striking characteristics of the work is the restraint by which the poet vividly suggests, in a few words, what another man would have made weak and ineffective by telling in many sentences.

Quotable passages await one on every side, but there is time to pause an instant only, and that instant because it is impossible to pass unnoticed such phrases as,—

“We’re scarce our father’s shadows cast at noone.”

“Onely death ads t’our length; nor are we growne
In stature to be men, ’till we are none.”

“Be more than man, or thou’rt lesse than an ant.”

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Beside the frequently quoted description of the lady,—

“ . . . her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one might almost say her body thought; ”

may be placed,—

“ She, whose faire body no such prison was,
But that a soule might well be pleased to passe
An age in her; ”

and,—

“ One whose deare body was so pure and thin,
Because it need disguise no thought within,
’Twas but a through-light scarfe, her mind t’enroule.”

Somewhat similar to these poems are the several “Funeral Elegies,” which comprehend more strong passages, in proportion to their extent, than any other of Donne’s poems. Extreme extravagance of thought and expression is largely absent. The thought is peculiar and the manner of expressing it quaint, yet there is a reflective and philosophical

depth and a reverential solemnity, which is powerful and uplifting, as it manifests itself in the treatment of God, Providence, life and death, faith, trust, hope, knowledge, wisdom, peace, and the future life.

The honor, purity, goodness, courage, grace, and sweetness of the dead are praised, while the tone of real honest feeling which seems to underlie these tributes, as it does not underlie all of Donne's work, both stimulates our sympathy for the loss and our friendly feeling for the author. The "Obsequies of Ye Lord Harrington" is the best of these elegies.

The "Progress of the Soul," to some minds, is the best of all Donne's poems. The thought is fresh, original, and delightfully strange; while the fulness of apt expression and happy characterization, and the many passages of deeply earnest thought and of lightly playful humor, make the poem indeed an excellent one. The poet, according to the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, in fol-

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lowing the soul of his lady from its creation in the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, by his wonderful imagination, takes us into animal and vegetable, fish and fowl, monkey and man, tracing the soul until it comes into a woman.

Not least in the interest of the poem is the frequent working up of facts of folk-lore, of popular and ecclesiastical tradition.

The pillars of Seth the antidiluvian, are mentioned; the Roman divinity Janus is identified with the Biblical Noah; the tree of life in the Garden of Eden grows on the same spot upon which its trunk was afterward used as the holy cross,—as in the rood-tree cycle of stories; the resemblances of the roots of the mandrake together with the traditional properties of its leaves and berries are brought in; the loose habits of the sparrow, the hatred of the small fish for the whale, the mouse killing the elephant by crawling up the proboscis and gnawing the brain; the wife of Cain and the

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relations of Cain and Seth,—these are some of the stories touched upon. Mingled with them are real geographical and historical allusions, a somewhat surprising knowledge of science,—evidenced in speaking of the moon and tides, the fertilization of fish roe, and the anatomical structure of the body—and an occasional bit of theological discussion.

The quaintness of the ideas stimulates the imagination, the masterly manner in which they are presented arouses the admiration, and the abundance of quietly amused interest in the philosophic humor appeals to good nature; all of these elements unite to make “The Progress of the Soul” most pleasant reading and stimulate a desire to know more of the life and work of its author.

So well were Sir Robert and Lady Drury pleased with all these poems that Donne was taken with them upon a long continental journey, while Mrs. Donne and her children were domiciled in Drury House, where, indeed, they

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remained until the death of Sir Robert, five years later.

Upon returning to England, Donne finally announced his attention of taking orders, and the next three years were spent in the study of languages and theology, and in the writing of a number of religious and theological works. Yet the lighter vein was not altogether neglected for the "Epithalamia" were written about this period. These marriage songs, although quite conventional in thought, are thoroughly artistic and have a light and airy beauty which is quite striking.

Almost immediately after his ordination in 1615, James I. made Donne chaplain, commanding him to preach before the court, and in a very short while the king and Prince Charles, upon a visit to Cambridge, expressed a desire to have the degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred upon the new chaplain.

It seems that the early escapades of the newly made cleric were yet in the public

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mind, for the University of Cambridge steadily refused to grant the honor until it was threatened with the king's mandate. Even then the degree was conferred under protest, and no entry of its conference was ever made upon the official records of the University.

Public opinion, however, was not all against him, for during the first year fourteen different country livings were offered Donne, and his fervor and eloquence as a pulpit orator became known far and wide. Concerning his preaching Walton seems to give a fair, although somewhat enthusiastic, estimate in saying,—“preaching the word so, as showed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he labored to distil into others; a preacher in earnest; weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them; always preaching to himself, like an angel from a cloud but in none; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to heaven in holy raptures and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship

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to amend their lives; here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those who practiced it, and a virtue so as to make it beloved even by those that loved it not; and all this with a most particular grace and an inexpressible addition of comeliness."

One or two temporary holdings were accepted, until the rectory of Sevenooks was received and held until his death. Donne was now made Reader in Divinity by the benchers of Lincoln's Inn, delivering before the society two sermons every Sunday in term time, and others on special occasions. At the splendid dedication of their chapel, designed by Inigo Jones, Donne was selected to preach the sermon.

"The celebrated Dr. Donne," was now the term by which he was known, and he became recognized as one of the most able and eloquent preachers of the day.

Before, however, it was possible long to enjoy the recognition which was coming from

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the world, within the family circle there came an almost overwhelming blow. This was the death of Mrs. Donne, in 1617, at an age of little more than thirty years. She was survived by seven children, five more having died during her lifetime. Walton pictures the intense sorrow of the bereaved man, "as the Israelites sat mourning by the rivers of Babylon, when they remembered Zion, so he gave some ease to his oppressed heart by thus reciting his sorrows; thus he began the day, and ended the night; ended the restless night and began the weary day in lamentation."

Donne's first sermon after the death of his wife was from the text, "Lo, I am the man that have seen affliction." His sorrow was poetically recorded in the metrical version of the Book of Lamentations, which was apparently made at this period.

Finding that "occupation was salvation," Donne threw himself so intensely into his studies that his health suffered severely. His

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industry was very extraordinary and the results of it most remarkable. Walton tells that at his death "he left the resultance of 1,400 authors, most of them abridged and analyzed with his own hand," and also "all business that passed of any public consequence, either in this or any of our neighboring nations, he abbreviated either in Latin, or in the language of that nation, and kept them by him for useful memorial. So he did the copies of divers letters and cases of conscience that had concerned his friends, with his observations and solutions of them, and divers other business of importance, all particularly and methodically digested by himself."

At the solicitation of many friends, Donne was persuaded to accompany Lord Doncaster to Germany. He delivered an eloquent farewell, preached before the Princess at Heidelberg, and was presented with the Staats-General gold medal at the Hague. In 1620, he was again preaching at Whitehall, his

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journey having improved his health and somewhat lessened his sorrows.

It is related that one day at dinner the king in his most pleasant manner remarked:—"Dr. Donne, I have invited you to dinner, and though you sit not down with me, yet I will carve to you a dish that I know you love well; for, knowing you love London, I do therefore make you Dean of St. Paul's; and, when I have dined, then do you take your beloved dish home to your study, say grace there to yourself and much good may it do you."

Not only this magnificent preferment, but also others, none so great but all together swelling the account, came to Dean Donne. The duties of prolocutor of the convocation of parliament, of the rectories of Blunham and of Bedfordshire, and of the vicarage of St. Dunstan's in the West, together with the functions of Royal Chaplain, were all administered in addition to those of the deanery of St. Paul's.

Donne's sermon before the Virginia Com-

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pany, celebrated for the sympathy it excited with the larger and nobler aims of the enterprise, has been called the first missionary sermon printed in the English language.

Religious and theological activity now so crowded the attention, that only a few "Divine Poems" represent the poetical activity of this period. Here may be placed "The Ode," referring sorrowfully to the earlier wanderings; the "Hymn to Christ," of repentance and prayer for aid; and the "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness," betokening a mature life drawing near its completion.

That Donne indeed felt his end approaching was made evident in no way more than by his now having made that remarkable grave monument, for which he posed shrouded in grave clothes and standing upright upon a marble urn, and in having drawn his will, with its many characteristic bequests. Frequent illnesses began to presage the end and when preaching at Whitehall in February, 1631, he

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was so exceedingly ill that the king remarked he was preaching his own funeral sermon. The remark proved to be true, for it was indeed Donne's last sermon; the text, "Unto God belong the issues of death," and the exceeding solemnity of the discourse, contributed to its impressiveness.

In drawing to its close a study of Donne, a poet who was yet more a man, whose kindly heart was and is felt through his poetry, one can appreciate the frame of mind in which those who have presented to his memory elegies and tributes have, practically without exception, concluded not with attempts at a critical summary of his literary methods or productions, but with words of deep personal feeling. We may then have countenance in concluding the present study by quoting, as a final illustration, the "Hymn to God the Father," one of Donne's latest pieces of work. In its recounting of sin, repentance, forgiveness, struggle toward the ideal, longing cry

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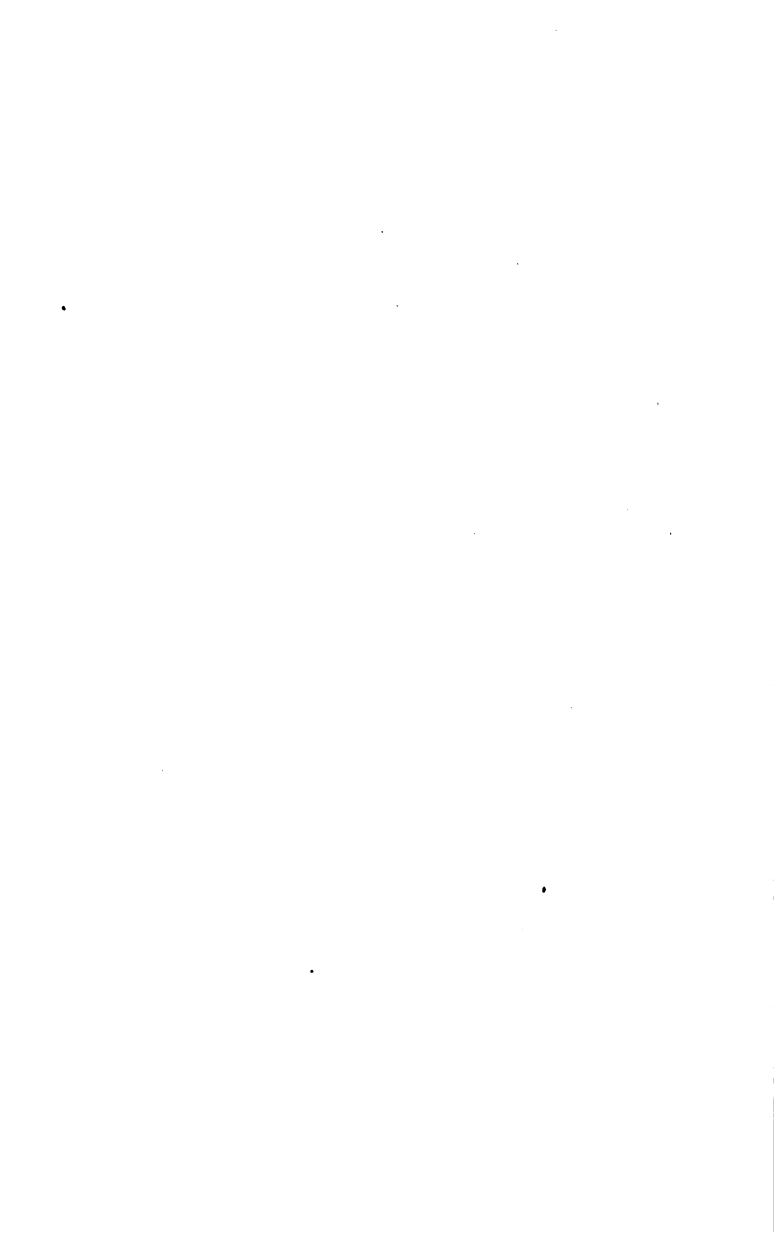
for help, faith, and consequent peace, it sums up the life of Donne and of many another man.) The poem reads:—

“Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin, through which I run
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

“Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have wonne
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

“I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore:
And having done that, Thou hast done;
• I fear no more.”

John Donne died on March 31, 1631, aged eight and fifty years.



A Mediaeval Love Story:
Chaucer's Tale of Griselda



*A Mediaeval Love Story:
Chaucer's Tale of Griselda*

I

THE law of indestructibility of matter is as true in literature as it is in nature, although critics have not become accustomed to emphasize it as have their brethren, the scientists. The life of man yields only a certain number of characteristics and incidents, and the mind of man evolves only a certain additional number: these constitute the literary raw material which must be worked up, over and over again. A thing most surprising to a reader who, imbued with modern ideas concerning literary ownership, dips into mediæval literature, is the manner in which all men then considered a good story as common property. A

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literary man who read a tale in Italian, would turn it into French, as nearly verbatim as he chose, and by virtue of that change it became his own; another would come, and, perchance, from the French and Italian versions, make in English a story which, in the eyes of the world, would then belong to him. It was not, indeed, even necessary to get the story from a literature other than one's own; a reissuing, only, was needed to establish ownership.

Few things so conclusively prove the indestructibility of literary material as the way in which a story would survive such treatment, and yet preserve its individuality. The tale about to be considered, since its origin somewhere in the mists of the dark ages, has been revised and modified, translated and adapted, for a matter of five or six hundred years, without losing an appreciable amount of vigor or freshness.

A definite origin for the story cannot be assigned; when the first literary form in which

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it has been found was sent by Bocaccio, its author, to Petrarch, that aged poet remarked that the story had long been to him a favorite. Attempts have been made to identify the heroine with a real individual who lived, as some say, about the year 1025 A. D., or, as others have it, 1103 A. D. A French *fabliau* has been suggested as a source, and numerous other suppositions have been made. None of them, however, seem to help us farther than the conclusion that, wheresoever Bocaccio derived his materials, we know of no earlier version than that which he has left in his "Decameron," where the story forms the final tale, the tenth on the tenth day.

One of the last letters of Petrarch's life was that in which he thanked his disciple for a copy of the work, and dedicated to him a Latin translation of it. "Your book which in your youth, as I think, you published in our mother tongue, I see has reached me. With my glance at it I have been delighted. Amidst

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many levities, I have marked some things of graver tone. At the beginning you have told well the story of that terrible plague time; at the end a story that charmed me. I learned it by heart to repeat to my friends. Then it occurred to me that it might delight those who did not know Italian. So one day I set myself to translate it, hoping you would be glad for me to do so. I have here given it in my own words, with just a few changes. To you I wish to dedicate this version."

Petrarch, in further writing of his free Latin version to Bocaccio, relates that upon showing the translation to one of his Paduan friends, the latter, touched with the tenderness of the story, burst into such frequent and violent fits of tears, that he could not read to the end. But a Veronese having heard of the Paduan's exquisiteness of feeling on this occasion, resolved to try the experiment. He read the whole aloud from beginning to end, without the least change of voice, or countenance,—

"I should have wept," added he, "like the Paduan, had I thought the story true. But the whole is a manifest fiction. There never was, nor ever will be, such a woman."

A very great deal has been written with regard to the possibility and probability of a personal interview between Chaucer and Petrarch, some persons of imagination thinking that the English poet was among the friends to whom Petrarch used to relate this story at Padua; indeed, it has even been surmised that Chaucer was the person who wept so profusely upon its reading. The matter has been well summarized by saying,—“We can creditably and honorably try hard to think that the two poets met, but with the knowledge we at present possess, we have no right to assert it.” The theory is so attractive, however, that the more general feeling was voiced by Lowell when he wrote,—“We might be sorry that no confirmation has been found for the story that Chaucer was ‘fined two shillings

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for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet street,' if it were only for the alliteration: but we refuse to give up the meeting with Petrarch. All the probabilities are in its favor. That Chaucer, being in Italy, should not have found occasion for seeing the most famous literary man of the day, is incredible."

Although such a discussion has been raised concerning the probability of a personal interview between Petrarch and Chaucer, no one has doubted that in his use of the story Chaucer has followed, and followed very closely indeed, Petrarch's Latin version of it. Chaucer's version was probably written in 1373 or 1374, and required but little revision to make it suitable for one of the Canterbury tales. Into this collection it was fitted as the tale told by the Oxford student.

In the prologue to the Clerk's tale, beginning,—

"Sir Clerk of Oxenforde," or hoste sayde,
"Ye ryde as coy and stille as doth a mayde."

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the host, remonstrating at the clerk's continual air of meditation, calls on him for a tale. To this the clerk replies,—

“There is, at the West syde of Itaille,
Doun at the roote of Vesulus, the colde,
A lusty playne, habundant of vitaille,
Wher many a toun and tour thou mayst biholde,
That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,
And Saluces this noble contee highte.”

This land was ruled by a marquis whose ancestors had long ruled it before him. He was fair, young, strong, a good ruler, and was universally loved by his people, except in that he thought only of the present and its pleasures. His people, after telling him of their great love and loyalty, finally asked that he would marry.

They offered even to choose a wife for him from the noblest in the land, in order that, at his death, the country might continue in the possession of his family, and not be distracted by a change of rule.

From pity for the people the marquis, although he cherished his freedom, finally as-

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sented with, however, the one condition that he should choose his own wife; that, whoever she might be, no objection should be made, and she should be ever treated as though she were the daughter of an emperor. At the request of the people, there was fixed a definite day upon which the union was to be consummated. Orders were at once given for the preparation of the feast, and the castle became busy with anticipation of the great event.

Not far from the castle, within the marquis's domain in a beautiful village, lived some poor people who farmed the surrounding country. The poorest man in all the village, Janicula by name, had a most lovely daughter, Griselda, who, although reared without luxuries or, indeed, comforts, was one of the most beautiful maidens the sun had ever seen. The only stay of the declining age of her father, she worked early and late, spinning in the field while she guarded the sheep by day, and preparing herbs for sale, by night.

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Often, in his hunting, the marquis had taken notice of her and, recognizing her true worth although others saw in her only a common peasant maiden, he had long determined to wed her, if he should ever deem it well to take a wife.

The wedding day approached, and the arrangements for the festival were all completed; the palace was decked in festal array, the preparations for great feasting were made, the dresses and jewels for the expected bride were ready. But no bride was found; it was nine o'clock on the wedding day, the procession of grand lords and ladies had long been waiting, and the people began to lament, fearing that it was all a trick of the youthful marquis.

The village maidens were hastening to complete their morning tasks, that they might see the new marquise when the grand procession should pass by. Griselda was performing her humble work among the cattle, when, suddenly, her name was called, and she saw the

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marquis standing at her side. He had come to ask from her father her hand in marriage; and, before the old man, astounded beyond measure, had collected his scattered wits, the bargain was made. Griselda's only part was to assent.

She was quickly despoiled of her old clothes, dressed in the gorgeous wedding garments by the great court ladies, crowned with gold, covered with jewels, mounted on a white horse, and led to the palace amid the rejoicings of the people; all before she had recovered her astonishment. The wedding was celebrated amid great joy, and the rich garments well became the wondrous beauty of the queen, who was so courtly and dignified that the people scarcely believed she could be the daughter of the poor Janicula,—

“And so discreet and fair of eloquence,
So benigne and so digne of reverence,
And coude so the peples herte embrace,
That ech hir lovede that looked on hir face.”

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The second part of the poem closes with announcing the birth of a daughter to the marquis; although a son would have been more gladly welcomed, there was, however, great joy.

This child was yet young when a strange desire to tempt the steadfastness of his wife took possession of the marquis, in spite of the fact that it was wholly needless.

He, however, persisted, and in a long speech recalled to Griselda her low origin, of which his people were ashamed, and, saying that it was necessary to do with the child as should be best, reminded her of her promise of perfect obedience.

The marquis feigned sadness, and sent a trusty retainer for the child, which was then taken away from its mother, who, sad even to the death, was yet meek and humble. The lord had commanded that the child be carefully tended, and secretly taken to its aunt, the Countess of Panick, at Bologna. This plan

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was fully carried out, only the lord and his messenger knowing of it. Now, frequently and unsuspectedly, the marquis came upon Griselda to see if she were at all changed, but he found that,—

“As glad, as humble, as bisy in servyse,
And eek in love as she was wont to be,
Was she to him in every maner wyse :
Ne of hir doghter nought a word spak she.”

Four years passed by until the birth of another child, a son, and the people rejoiced greatly at the advent of an heir to the realm. After two years more, the desire of the marquis to tempt his wife again became paramount.

Once more he reminded her of her humble birth, saying that his people would not have her son to rule over them. Her answer, as before, was humility itself,—

“But as yow list: nought greveth me at al,
Thogh that my doghter and my sone be slayn,
At your commandment, this is to sayn,—
I have nought had no part of children tweyne
But first sicknesse, and after wo and payne,”

Again the servant came, taking the boy away as though he knew no compassion; out of Griselda's sight the child was carefully treated, and secretly conveyed to the aunt in Bologna. Again the lord watched for signs of rebellion, but again found none. Yet, although his people now began greatly to murmur against his cruelty, he persisted in his course.

The daughter was now twelve years old, and, feigning to have received a bull from the Pope allowing him to marry again, the marquis requested the aunt to bring the maid to Saluce, in grand state, as his new wife. The mother's heart had been tried to the fullest, and now Griselda's wifely instincts were to be assailed. The marquis told her of complaints of the people, the bull of the Pope, and of the new wife already on her way, and commanded her back to her father's house,—

“ And she answerde agayn in pacience,
‘ My lord,’ quod she, ‘ I woot, and wiste alway
How that bitwixen your magnificence
And my poverte no wight can ne may

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Maken comparison : it is no nay.
 I ne heeld me never digne in no manere
 To be your wyf, no, ne your chamberere.

“ And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,—
 The heighe god take I for my witnesse,
 And also wisly he my soule glade—
 I never held me lady me maistresse,
 But humble servant to your worthinesse,
 And ever shal, whyl that my lyf may dure,
 Aboven every worldly creature.

“ And of your newe wyf, god of his grace
 So graunte yow wele and prosperitee :
 For I wol gladly yelden hir my place,
 In which that I was blisful wont to be,
 For sith it lyketh yow, my lord, quod she,
 That whylom weren al myn hertes reste,
 That I shal goon, I wol gon whan yow leste.”

Sorrowfully, she took off her jewels, her queenly dresses, and her wedding ring, and, in her old ragged gown, went barefoot back to her father's humble cabin. She was, however, accompanied by crowds of sympathizing folk, who cursed the cruelty of the lord. At her home she lived as she had done years before.

At the arrival of the Earl of Panick, bringing with great pomp and richness the new marriage, to Griselda there came a message to come and see to the arranging of the palace for the advent. This was done, and the people congregated about the palace saw the beautiful newcomer, while all went merry as a wedding should.

At last the marquis was satisfied,—

“ ‘ This is y-nogh, Grisilde myn,’ quod he,
‘ Be now na-more agast ne yyel apayed ;
I have thy feith and thy benignitee,
As wel as ever womman was, assayed,
In greet estaat, and povreliche arrayed.
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedfastnesse,’—
And hir in arms took and gan hir kisse.

“ And she for wonder took of it no keep ;
She herde nat what thing he to hir seyde ;
She ferde as she had stert out of a sleep,
Til she out of hir masednesse abreyde.
‘ Grisilde,’ quod he, “ by god that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon other I have,
Ne nevver hadde, as god my soule save !

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“‘This is thy doghter which thou hast supposed
To be my wyf; that other feithfully
Shal be myn heir, as I have ay purposed;
Thou bare hem in thy body trewely.
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively;
Tak hem agayn, for now maystow nat seye
That thou hast lorn non of thy children tweye.’”

Griselda at first could not comprehend the fulness of her happiness, and when she did, swooned for joy. She was taken by the ladies and again clothed with her dignity,—

“And in a cloth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon
Upon hir heed, they in-to halle hir broghte,
And ther she was honoured as hir oghte.

“Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende,
For every man and woman dooth his might
This day in murthe and revel to dispende
Til on the welkne shoon the sterres light.
For more solempne in every mannes sight
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hir mariage.”

Years now passed, the daughter married a great lord, the son ruled well in his time and “they all lived happy, ever afterward.” Thus the tale ended.

II

It would require more space than may be commanded to tell with any attempt at completeness the story of Chaucer's clerk's tale, for the five hundred years after Chaucer. It will be possible to give, here and there, an incident or detail sufficient, perhaps, to indicate the direction of the development, and allow the remainder to be filled in by the individual imagination. Even before Chaucer's death, the story must have become very popular in France; in Paris the comedians presented it in a mystery in 1393, five years before Saint Maur, the earliest French theatre, was established. A number of renditions based upon this mystery were common, for in French prose of the fourteenth century twenty different versions have been found.

Perhaps the first mention of the story in

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English was Lydgate's reference to it in "The Fall of Princes," "The Temple of Glass," and in a ballad translated from the Latin.

In 1471, in Augsburg, there was printed a translation of *Griselda* by Heinrich Steinhöwel, the first of the well-nigh countless German forms of the story. The introduction into art may have begun with Pinturicchio, living from 1454-1513, who executed the story of *Griselda* in a series of three frescoes which are now in the National Gallery in London.

Soon treatments of the theme began to appear under other titles and with some change of detail. Luigi Alamanni, an Italian poet, wrote, somewhere about 1525, a novel in which a Count of Barcelona subjected his wife to trials similar to those of *Griselda*.

Parallels to other sufferers, too, began to be drawn, as in a poem written by William Forest, Chaplain to Queen Mary, of which the title is "A True and most Notable History of a right Noble and Famous Lady produced in

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Spayne, entitled the second Gresield." This was a panegyric history of Queen Catharine, Henry VIII.'s first queen, in which she is compared to patient Griselda and Henry to Earl Walter. The book is dedicated to Queen Mary, and the manuscript in which it is preserved, beautifully written on vellum and once elegantly bound and embossed, evidently appears to have been the copy presented to her majesty by the author.

It is scarcely necessary to say that by Hans Sachs the theme has been made the basis of a drama.

In the sixteenth century there began to be circulated ballads based on the story, beginning, perhaps, in 1565 with Owen Rogers' license to print "a ballat entituled the songe of pacyent Gressell unto her make." Typical of these ballads is the immensely popular one "Of Patient Grissel and a Noble Marquess. To the Tune of the Bride's Good Morrow." This gives the story substantially as the clerk

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told it. There are, however, some minor differences, as, that the people did not ask the lord to marry, that they became angry with him for choosing such an humble wife, and that he tried her that "men might pity her case." The children, too, were born at one time, and Griselda mourned greatly when they were taken away. The opening verse of the ballad runs,—

"A noble Marquesse,
As he did ride a hunting
 Hard by a forest side,
A faire and comely maiden,
As she did sit a spinning,
 His gentle eye espide.

"Most faire and comely
And of comely grace was she,
 Although in simple attire
She sung full sweetly
With pleasant voice melodiously,
 Which set the lord's heart on fire."

Numerous ballads include one or more incidents which may be identified in their essence with some parts of the Griselda story. With

the incidents in the third temptation of Griselda, when she serves at the new wedding of her husband, may be compared the old ballad of "Fair Annie" wherein, too, the heroine performs a like service, not, however, without much weeping, for a fair lady who has come from over the sea to wed her lover. At last it is found that the newcomer is the sister of Fair Annie, but, at this discovery, she refuses to marry at Annie's expense, and all is made well. There are many versions of this ballad. "Child Waters," and "Burd Ellen and Lord Thomas," are somewhat analogous.

Sir Walter Scott pointed out that in some of its parts the tale is much the same with the Breton romance called "Lay le Frain," or "The Song of the Ash," and a Danish ballad of "Skjæn Anna," or "Fair Annie." In the former, to the wife of a knight were born two daughters, one of which was taken far away by a maid and, at night, placed in an ash-tree by the door of a convent. When found

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in the morning by the porter the infant was taken to the abbess, and, as the rich clothing betokened noble birth, the child was baptized, and christened *le Freine*, Breton for ash. The maid grew, and became the most lovely of all the realm, when she was carried off from the convent by a knight. After a while, wearied of her, he prepared to take another wife and the wedding was solemnized. *Le Freine*, thinking the wedding chamber too poorly decked, had placed on display the rich robes in which she was wrapped when found at the convent, but no sooner did the mother of the new wife see these than she recognized, in *Le Freine*, her long lost daughter. She then remained the only wife of the knight, and all lived happily ever afterward.

In the story of "Fair Annie," a Danish sea rover steals Anna, the daughter of England's king, and sells her to the son of a duke. She is beloved by all his household and subjects, but, after a time, a new bride comes. Against

the duke's wish, Anna, appearing before her, serves her weeping. The bride finding in the weeper her long lost sister, Anna remains the wife of the duke, and the sister returns to England.

This story, really the "Lay of the Ash" by Marie de France over again, is found in the romance literature of France, Scotland, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Spain, and, probably, of other countries. It furnishes an excellent example of the manner in which a ballad takes on modifications, in different lands. In the French, for example, the poor girl had been brought up in a convent and stolen from it by a man of rank. Among the Flemish, traders and commercial people, she had been pledged to a money lender and sold. Among the piratical Danes she had been carried off by pirates. Among the inn-loving Germans, stolen by a pedlar and sold to a landlady, she becomes a barmaid until she is finally discovered by a knightly lodger to be his sister.

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Among the Spaniards, burning with zeal against the infidel, she is carried off by a Moorish king from the Court of Castile to be a slave to his wife. The wife, by a ring, recognizes the slave to be her own sister. Ballad-like forms with some similarity have been pointed out in Sanskrit; in the "Katha Sarit Sagara," the "Ramayana," and two in the "Mahabharata."

In more literary form, the story was often used to point a moral. So we find it in a black-letter tract, of about the year 1600, entitled "The Ancient, true and admirable history of Patient Grisel, a Poor Man's Daughter in France, shewing how maides, by her example in their good behaviour may marrie rich husbands; and likewise wives by their patience and obedience may gaine much glorie."

In Henslow's diary there are several interesting references to a play, printed in 1603, with the title "The Pleasant Comodie of Patient Grissell as it hath been sundrie times lately

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plaid by the right honorable the Earl of Nottingham (Lord high Admiral) his servants." The chief plot relates to the Marquis of Saluzzo and Griselda, while two underplots are interwoven, diversifying the entertainment and adding to the effect of the main story. The play in many parts is really good.

Our story, though always extremely popular in Italy, was first dramatized there only in 1620 when Apostolo Zeno converted it into an opera. In the same year the whole of Boccaccio's "Decameron" was first translated into English; the version of the story of Griselda was but poorly done.

Shakespeare speaks of Griselda in the "Taming of the Shrew," and there are a number of references showing that the story was dramatically represented in Germany about this time, and also that there was played in Germany an English parody on Griselda.

There is, of course, mention of the story in Butler's "Hudibras," while our old friend

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Pepys writes in his diary for August 30, 1667, saying "To Bartholomew fayre, to walk up and down; and there, among other things, find my Lady Castelmaine at a puppet-play (Patient Grizzell), and the street full of people expecting her coming out."

Passing over well-nigh innumerable ballads, chapbooks, and many sorts of reprints, we come to what was probably the first attempt at modernizing Chaucer's clerk's tale, although many of the other Canterbury Tales had been before attempted. This version of the tale by George Ogle in 1739 contains twice as many lines as Chaucer's and is poorly done. Numerous Italian, German, and Spanish versions appeared about this time.

The name of the heroine seems to have been a favorite with Sir Walter Scott, since he has put it into "Guy Mannering," the "Heart of Midlothian," and "St. Ronan's Well." One of the most popular of Miss Edgeworth's novels bears the title "The Modern Griselda."

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Mrs. Browning, too, uses Griselda to point a moral.

The latest modernization of Chaucer's version which has been found in England is in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for May, 1837, and is rather well done.

The story continued popular in other countries until in very recent years; France and Holland each having versions of 1840, Spain had one in 1820 and another in 1858, and Italian forms are found for 1820 and 1862. There was acted so late as 1874, at the Princess Theatre in London, a version of the Griselda story which had been dramatized by the novelist, Miss Braddon.

Until recently, possibly indeed even at the present time, the story might be found among the English puppet shows. It is acted in the Italian marionette and stenterello theatres, and in Italy, also, are often found series of common pictures illustrating Griselda's story. These have probably been popular as decorations

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among the peasants since the English poet of the ballad in Ritson's "Ancient Songs," sang,—

" We in the country do not scorn
Our walls with ballads to adorn
Of patient Grissel and the Lord of Lorne."

Mention has been made of a considerable number of the English forms which serve to show the wide and continuous popularity of the story. To do this for other languages would be equally possible for, not in the analogous forms alone, but in almost unchanged completeness the story has been traced all over Europe,—as far as Iceland, where it appears in verse as the "Saga of Grishkilldi Tholinmodu," that is "Griselda of the Suffering Mind." Among the folk-books of Low and High German the story has been found in thirty-eight forms. France has ten similar chapbook forms; the Netherlands are credited with five. The Danish have eleven, and the Swedish two under the title "Historia

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om en Medicinal Doctoris Dotter." One form is found each in the literature of Bohemia, the Tyrol, Denmark, Iceland, and Russia, while as many as twenty unclassified forms exist.

Of poetical renderings the French has three, the Italian five, the Dutch two, the Spanish one, the German five, and the Icelandic one. In the form of drama the tale is found in French seven times, in German nine times,—one version, "Griselda" by Freidrich Hahn had its eighth edition published in 1869—in Dutch once, in Spanish once, and in Italian seven times, the latest in 1869.

To attempt anything like a summary of the wanderings of the story, or an epitome of the reasons why it seemed so suitable for wide reproduction, would be but to invite failure. Nothing, perhaps, will so satisfactorily serve to bring together one's ideas of the story and its spread as the remarks made conjointly upon it by Mr. Hales and Dr. Furnivall, explaining, in a measure, why a tale with some characteristics

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so unpleasing to the modern mind has had such extraordinary life.

“There were current in the Middle Ages numberless tales and songs abusive of women. This sorry literature sprang probably from the monks, who were always ready enough to clamor that women were everything bad and abominable,—the very acrimony of their slanders would have sufficed to excite a literature reactionary and protesting. Certainly such literature grew and flourished. The “Nut Brown Maid” was written especially to gainsay those who accused them of perpetual inconstancy, “Patient Grissell” to rebuke those who pronounced them ever shrews. Griselda is essentially a reactionary story; else, the patience of the heroine is too extreme to be tolerated, she is tame to excess, she is characterless. If we remember how incessantly the shrewishness of women, their obstinacy, their furiousness, were asserted and proclaimed, then we shall understand why

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Griselda's patience is represented as so extreme and invincible, why the roughest, cruelest, shamefullest wrongs cannot ruffle it."

*The Miraculous Voyage
of St. Brendan*

The Miraculous Voyage of St. Brendan

THE natural and human interest in stories of adventure, which seems to be universal and permanent, received so strong a stimulus by the eager spirit back of the crusades, that there grew up at that time in Europe a whole literature of wild and strange travels and voyages. This preceded the literature of chivalry.

John Dunlop, in his "History of Fiction," devotes many delightful pages to tracing the origin and development of some of the "Imaginary Voyages." Their relation to real voyages is about that which novels and romances bear to real history and biography. Often the intention is evidently to furnish interest and instruction not supplied by the real world. Sometimes, man is made to realize his capabilities by being thrown, soli-

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tary, upon his own resources. Again, is shown what may be attained by domestic society, when excluded from intercourse with the rest of the world. The traveler is sometimes received among nations of perfect and ideal wisdom; again he encounters prodigies or monsters. Humor, satire, and philosophy have often been embodied in accounts of visits to the planets or to the inner regions of the earth.

Some stories,—like Lucian's "True History," Cyrano de Bergerac's "History of the States of the Moon," and "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen"—were professedly fabulous. Others,—by Benjamin, the Jew of Tudela; Marco Polo, the Venetian nobleman; and John Mandeville, the English Knight—were extravagantly embellished accounts of actual journeys into strange lands.

Among such actual voyagers and explorers, the Irish monks were early eminent. Baring-Gould quotes early records as authority for

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the suggestion that they had been in Iceland before it was colonized by the Norse in 870, and had visited the Faroe Isles a century earlier. Indeed, it is even said that the Icelanders first learned of America as a "Greater Ireland," which had been visited and colonized by Irish monks.

The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," for the year 891, relates how,—“Three men came to King Alfred, in a boat without oars, from Ireland, whence they had stolen away, because, for the love of God, they desired to be on pilgrimage, they knew not whither. The boat in which they came was made of two hides and a half; and they took with them provisions for seven days; and about the seventh day they came on shore in Cornwall, and soon after went to King Alfred.”

Many of the adventurous longings and imaginings of the Irish monks gradually epitomized themselves into a single story. In the words of Charles Kingsley,—“Out of dim

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reports of fairy islands in the West, of the Canaries and the Azores, of icebergs and floes sailing in the Northern Sea, upon the edge of the six-months' night; out of Edda stories of the Midgard snake, which is coiled round the world; out of scraps of Greek and Arab myth, from the Odyssey or the Arabian Nights, brought home by Vikings who had been for pilgrimage and plunder through the Straits of Gibraltar into the far East; out of all these materials were made up, as years rolled on, the famous legend of St. Brendan and his seven years' voyage in search of the 'land promised to the saints.' "

This Brendan legend, it may be well to note in passing, differentiates itself at once from many other tales famous in the middle ages, and that in two particulars. Its origin and development lie wholly within mediæval and modern times, and it is, so far at least as the writer has been able to determine, altogether European.

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An outline of the story, according to a Middle English Version is as follows:—

“Saint Brendan belonged to England, lived an ascetic life, and was abbot over a thousand monks.

“One day he asked another abbot, Beryn by name, what he had seen in other lands. Beryn related the adventures of his godson Mernok, who had gone to an isle far in the sea toward the Eastern Ocean. One whole day he and his companions were in darkness; but then, by the grace of the Lord, they reached a land brighter than the sun. It was the Lord’s own land, and through Him it was thus bright.

“As soon as Saint Brendan heard this story he chose twelve of his monks, prepared a large ship, and set sail on a voyage to unknown lands.

“They soon saw a large isle on the north side of the ship. Three whole days they sailed about ere they could approach and

land. Finally they succeeded in reaching the shore. There they were guided by a hound to a large and beautiful hall, where a board was spread with bread and fish.

“Thence they visited the land of sheep. Afterwards an island was visited where a fallen angel, in the form of a bird, told Brendan that they must yet travel six years, each year returning to hold Easter feast among the birds.

“Then for four months in their journey eastward the voyagers were in grievous peril. They found a haven at last, through the grace of Christ, and were hospitably entertained upon an island by an aged man.

“When next they landed they discovered that what they had taken for an island was, really, a great whale. While they were celebrating the feast of St. Peter the fishes flocked round, and Brendan preached to them.

“Soon a north wind arose and drove the ship before it for eight days, to a gloomy

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country overhung with bitter smokes. Here they were attacked by a fierce wight and his fellows. All the land seemed on fire and, soon, Brendan perceived it was the mouth of hell. One of his monks, who had done wickedly, was seized by a madman of the island and cast into the fire.

“Then the ship drove southward, to a huge rock where was a naked, miserable ghost. He told Brendan that he was Judas Iscariot. Through the Lord’s grace he was allowed to rest from the torments of hell on this rock each Sunday. Fiends came and sought to take him away, but Brendan interposed for the wight. In the morning the fiends returned and took Judas with them.

“A three days’ journey now brought Brendan and his men to an isle where dwelt a hermit who had once been a monk of St. Patrick. They then came again to the paradise of birds. After forty days’ voyage from this place, they came to a beautiful country

where were trees full of fruit, and where it was always day. Here Brendan was told that his time of death drew near.

“Then they turned homeward, and were welcomed joyfully by their brethren. Shortly after Brendan died. He was made a saint, and a fair abbey was reared where his body was laid.”

Such accounts of the legendary doings of St. Brendan have become so widely famous that the real facts of his life are greatly obscured. It is, however, known that he was born about the year 480, from a distinguished family, that his travel was wide for those days, and that he was a founder and superior of monasteries. He died about 575 and was buried at Clonfert, in Galway, the greatest of his foundations. He is, indeed, usually known as Brendan of Clonfert. Although many details of his life are mentioned as early as the ninth century, no real biography was written until the fifteenth.

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It is in a ninth century life of Brendan's pupil, St. Malo, that the earliest known version of the "Voyage" is found. Malo, also having wonderful miraculous powers, was taken by Brendan on a voyage in search of a certain mysterious island "Yma." After being at sea for seven Easters, they came to an island where was buried the giant Milldu. Since he had once seen Yma, Malo brought him to life to inquire its direction. But the giant, being unable to tell this, was allowed again to die and be buried. Another version relates that the giant tried to lead them to Yma, but being unable, died again of chagrin. At all events, the voyagers never reached that land. Instead, they were favored with the sight of a fountain of jewels, and the experience of mistaking for an island a whale, which religiously supported them until they had finished celebrating the Mass.

Many early Irish tales resemble "The Voyage of St. Brendan," but the most strikingly

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like of all is "The Navigation of Maelduin." This story was considered one of the "one hundred and eighty-seven tales a Complete Bard should know," and was attributed to "Ald the Fair, Chief sage of Ireland."

In epitome it is as follows,—“Maelduin, reared by the queen of his province, when a youth, learns that his mother was a nun, and that his father, Ailill, had been killed before the birth of his son. Determining to discover his father's slayer, he consults a wizard, and is instructed to build a ship, and embark with exactly seventeen men. The start is just made when Maelduin's three foster-brothers come swimming after. To keep them from drowning they are taken on board.

“By midnight the ship has come near two small islands. From the open windows of two forts upon the islands come the words of men who are boasting their deeds. One of them declares that he has killed Ailill. Maelduin at once prepares for battle, but a great

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wind arises and drives the ship far out to sea. This occurrence is blamed upon the foster-brothers who have come upon the ship in defiance of the wizard's words.

"For three years and seven months the ship is now driven to and fro, visiting many strange islands. One day they come to an island where there are houses but no men in them. In a hall there are tables, with meat and drink, but no living creature save a small cat leaping from one pillar to another. The voyagers eat and drink and carry away the fragments. But as they go, one of the foster-brothers attempts to take with him a toque which hung as an ornament on the wall. Immediately the cat leaped upon him, changed into a fiery arrow, and burned him to ashes.

"Some time after was reached an island full of black men, weeping and wailing. Here one of the remaining foster-brothers went on shore, began likewise to weep and wail, and was finally lost to view.

"After another long interval of sailing the ship came to an island where people were playing and laughing, and here the third foster-brother landed and disappeared.

"The spell which bound the voyagers is now broken, and they soon reach a lonely rock inhabited by a hermit, clothed only in his long white hair. He has been fed with salmon, by an otter, for seven years. Now other food is brought him by unseen hands. He tells Maelduin that the man who killed Ailill will be found, but that he must be forgiven.

"Soon appears a bird like the falcon of Ireland. This leads them once more to the island of the fortresses. Again the voices are heard. One says,—'And what if Maelduin should come now?' 'Great welcome to him, if he come,' says the chief of the house, 'he hath been for a long space in much tribulation.' Hearing this Maelduin strikes upon the door crying, 'Maelduin is here.' And he and

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his companions are made greatly welcome. They are newly clothed, and relate all the marvels they have encountered."

The similarity between "The Navigation of Maelduin" and "The Voyage of Brendan" has given rise to interesting questions and to much discussion. Some scholars have agreed to think that many of the incidents of the Maelduin are derived from the Brendan. Others, and these the greater number, consider the Maelduin the earlier, and the Brendan based upon it.

Study of the various manuscript copies and versions of the poems has been exhaustive and inconclusive. But a comparison of the incidents of the stories leads clearly to the conclusion that the Maelduin is, in reality, the earlier, and that the Brendan is a monkish adaptation of it.

Modified, for example, from the Maelduin seem to be Brendan's desire to search for an unknown isle, his selection of an exact and

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limited number of companions, the coming of three extra monks, and the loss of these three who had disobeyed orders,—one at the hall ornamented and furnished with food, another among the crowds of laughing youths, and another upon the isle of the smoky mountain. Other details seem also to be derived from the Maelduin,—that of the preaching to the fish, for example. At one time in the Maelduin the voyagers come to a square silver column, standing in the middle of the sea. From its summit a silver net is suspended. The ship passes through one of the meshes of this, and one of its company strikes off a piece of the net with his spear, devoting it, at the same time, to the high altar of his church. In the Brendan the column is of crystal, the net-like canopy is of silver, and, instead of striking off a bit of this, there is miraculously found upon the ledge of the column a crystal chalice and a silver patera, for the administration of the sacrament.

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From such details is built up the generalization that nearly all of the episodes of the "Voyage of St. Brendan" are, more or less directly, based upon those in the "Navigation of Maelduin."

Be this as it may, no one has been found to doubt the conclusion that the Brendan story is, as Thomas Wright has said,—“one of the most remarkable and widely spread legends of the Middle Ages.” Charles Kingsley’s words concerning it may be requoted from Baring-Gould,—“The tale, from whatever dim reports it may have sprung, is truly,—as M. Jubenal calls it—a monkish Odyssey. It is a dream of the hermit’s cell. No woman, no city, no nation, is ever seen during the seven years’ voyage. Ideal monasteries and ideal hermits people the ‘deserts of the ocean.’ All the beings therein,—save demons and cyclops—are Christians, and even the very birds keep the festivals of the church as laws of nature. The voyage succeeds, not by

seamanship, nor geographic knowledge, nor even by chance; but by the miraculous prescience of the saint, or of those whom he meets; and the wanderings of Ulysses, or of Sinbad, are rational and human in comparison with those of St. Brendan."

"Yet there are in the story," he continues, "elements in which the Greek and Arab legends are altogether deficient, perfect innocence, patience, and justice, with faith in a God who prospers the innocent and punishes the guilty; ennobling obedience to the saint, who stands out a truly heroic figure above the trembling crew; and more valuable still, the belief in, and craving for an ideal, even though the ideal be a mere earthly paradise, the 'divine discontent,' as it has been well called, which is the root of all true progress; which leaves no man at peace save him who has said, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

The interest, if not the value, of the story is

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proved by its marvelous spread among most European peoples.

Naturally, there are numerous Irish versions of "The Voyage" and of similar stories. In "The Voyage of Bran," for example, three companies, of nine men each, seek the earthly paradise and touch, among other places, at the isle of laughter and at the land where the castle furnished with food was found by Brendan. The "Book of Linsmore" gives a version which is of interest. Brendan sees, from a promontory, the isle of Promise with angels rising from it. He, with three new ships and ninety men, spends five years seeking the land. At Easter tide the monks wish to go on land, to celebrate the feast. Brendan tells them that God can give them land wherever He pleases. Upon this, a great fish rises above the waves, like level and smooth high land. Upon his back they celebrate Easter. When they are once more in their ships, the fish

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plunges again beneath the waves. Thus they celebrate Easter seven times.

Extremely interesting studies have been made of the spread of the "Voyage of St. Brendan" in Middle Irish literature, and in popular Irish sailor traditions.

The story being so thoroughly a monkish legend, it is to be expected that there would be many Latin versions. And this is, indeed, the case, both in prose and verse. The writer has listed at least thirty poetical renderings, some of them printed many times, others never yet printed. Some contain new incidents, omit old ones, and vary at many points. The prints are as early as 1516, and as late as the "Kilkenny Book," in 1872. A half dozen Latin prose versions are known.

The dozen and a half English manuscripts which contain the "Voyage of St. Brendan," seem all to be more or less close variants of one version, rather than independent accounts. Their relation to one another, and to their orig-

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inal, has never yet been thoroughly studied. The story usually makes Brendan choose twelve monks, to whom two more add themselves. The theft of the bit of silver and the consequent death of one of the intruding monks is not mentioned. The whale, who is named "Jasoni," is said to try night and day to put his tail into his mouth, but is unable to do so because of his size. The two intruding monks who are mentioned, lose their lives in the usual way. The column standing in the sea is omitted. Certain omissions and additions suggest that the English versions have a relation, more or less close, with those in Anglo-Norman.

Caxton, in 1483, and Wynken de Worde, in 1526, printed English prose versions, and there are others yet unprinted. The few variations from the English poems can be explained by supposing misunderstandings upon the part of printers or adaptors.

It is most interesting to see in what diverse

ways the story has been used in modern English.

The Irish poet, Denis Florence MacCarthy, modernized and interpreted it in 1848. His version is quite unimaginative; his interpretation is far too much so. To him the Voyage of St. Brendan is the most interesting and the most authentic narrative in the whole Irish legendary; it is the first historical romance ever written; the earliest description of an Atlantic sea voyage. He has no doubt that the incidents in it are but thinly disguised facts, and that Brendan was, in reality, the discoverer of America, nine hundred years before Columbus set sail. He identifies the places at which the saint touched during the voyage, and shows how what Brendan thought was divine power, was, in reality, merely the Gulf Stream bearing him either to Virginia or to New England, whence the voyagers marched inland fifteen days to the Ohio. Mr. MacCarthy considered the portions of the story relating to the

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"Isle of Birds" to be the beginnings of American ornithology!

As far as possible from this poet's work is another version which also appeared in the "Dublin University Magazine," but some thirty years later. This new modernizer,—he was, and should remain, nameless—is without shame in his ridicule of the story and in his employment of puns.

He begins his travesty by relating of Brendan that,—

"Till he was old, he did not roam,—
However much inclined—
Unless, while bodily at home,
He wandered in his mind."

Once during the voyage,—

"Crowding sail on the ship they soon brought her
To an island that made their mouths water;
For grapes grew as thick as wild berries;
And there in safe harbor they glided,
For clearly the place was provided
With natural ports,—perhaps sherries—"

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Upon another occasion,—

“Once more a new isle was in sight
But its folks made such gestures uncivil,
St. Brendan exclaimed, ‘Och! the divil!’
And he found, with dismay, he was right!
That place,—the name whereof I’ll make
To ears polite, no mention—
The doughty saint, he well might quake,
Had reached without intention.”

The best modern employment of the story, or a part of it, is in Matthew Arnold’s short poem, “Saint Brandan.” It is based upon a single incident in the legend. The saint sees an iceberg, upon which for one hour each Christmas night the traitor Judas is allowed respite from the pains of hell. This mercy is granted because of his once giving his cloak to a leper.

The thought of the poem,—it is not one of the author’s best,—is epitomized in the words of Judas,—

“Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,
What blessing must full goodness shower,
When fragments of it small, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power.”

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Of French versions of "The Voyage of St. Brendan" there have been found a dozen, existing in half a hundred manuscripts and early prints.

One Anglo-Norman version is of particular interest, since it was dedicated to Adelza of Louvain, daughter of Godfrey Duke of Brabant, and second wife of Henry I. of England. She, if not the personage herself, is surely the sister of the Elsa of Brabant, who was championed by the mystic knight Lohengrin. This version of Brendan was written, soon after the queen's marriage to Henry in 1121, by a certain "Benoit," whom, together with the other poets Philippe de Thaon and David, she patronized. The dedication hails her as a strengthener of human and divine law and a bringer of peace. The version, as are others of those in French, is based upon a Latin original. It is also, as some of the others are not, simple, clear, and pleasing.

Another interesting French version is in-

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cluded in the second redaction of the encyclopædic collection which Gautier de Metz first issued, in 1246, as "The Image of the World." A half-dozen versions were printed about the year 1500. One or two versions in French prose are preserved, and there are records of at least one Breton lay concerning Brendan.

It might be thought that Brendan would make but a strange figure in old and new German and Dutch. That he made, however, a popular one, is evident from the fact that there are a score of versions in those languages,—most of them derived from the Latin. One relates how Brendan finds a mast which is made from the tree of life, and which still preserves the power of giving virtue, youth, and hope. Another begins by relating how Brendan was one day reading a book filled with miraculous narrations. Angered at what seemed to be exaggerations, he threw the book into the fire. As a punishment for his incredulity, heaven caused him to leave his country, and, during

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seven years, to see with his own eyes the miracles which he had deemed impossible.

The relations of the German, Dutch, Saxon and Flemish versions to one another and to their sources have afforded much speculation to scholars. But with them, and with such versions as the Old Welsh and the Old Spanish, the untechnical reader has but little to do.

Throughout legendary literature, ancient, mediæval, and modern, are found separate incidents corresponding to certain of those in the Brendan story. There is usually just enough of variety to make the comparison interesting.

The Judas incident selected for his poem by Matthew Arnold, is common to many mediæval tales. The traitor is sometimes described as being allowed relief during each Christmas-tide, in other accounts he is said to be spared each Sunday. Legends of St. Paul relate how he overcame demon tormentors, just as St. Brendan did, to obtain longer respite for Judas.

Huon of Bourdeaux pictures Judas, doomed to be tossed eternally in a whirlpool, with no protection from the elements save a small piece of cloth, which he had once bestowed in charity.

Tales of speaking and listening birds are widely spread. An Irish legend tells how Elijah, under the tree of life in Paradise, preaches to the souls of the righteous, embodied as bright white birds. The voyagers in the Irish "Voyage of Snedgus," come to an island where is a great tree with beautiful birds in its branches. Atop is a great gold and silver bird which tells of creation and of the Saviour. When he tells of doomsday the birds, for dread, beat themselves with their wings until showers of blood fall. At other times melodious is the music of the birds singing psalms and canticles.

Stories of great fish are widely distributed since,—and indeed before—the days of Sinbad the sailor. The eleventh century Raoul Glau-

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ber tells that Brendan's whale had been so long above the water that trees grew upon its back. Some of these were cut down by the monks, in order to make a fire. It was the heat of this, indeed, which first apprised the whale of the presence of his visitors. Philippe de Thaun credits the beast with a craftiness which makes him cover himself with sand, and pretend to be an island, until he is landed upon; then he maliciously plunges into the depths of the sea and leaves his victims to drown. An Anglo-Saxon physiologus in the Exeter Book gives a similar account of "The Whale," and follows it with a "Significatio" or moral, to the effect that just so deceptive and so fatal are the wiles of Satan.

The legendary heroes who go, as Brendan did, in search of unknown lands or of the Earthly Paradise are, as is well known, innumerable.

"The Voyage of St. Brendan" has often, too, been given a place among the many de-

scriptions of mysterious islands which have been literally accepted.

Far back in antiquity the minds of seafaring men seem to have created fabulous islands and to have filled them with wonders. Homer tells of the islands of Æolus and Circe, Strabo describes the Phœnecians and the Island of Tin, Plato began the accounts of the fabled isle of Atlantis, and Hesiod told of the Fortunate Isles, on the confines of the earth toward the setting sun.

Mediæval fables of islands were no less abundant and varied. Atlantis was still believed in in the days of Columbus. He heard much of the "Island of the Seven Cities," founded by "Seven Bishops" who had fled from the Moorish invaders of Spain in the eighth century. The cities were then said still to flourish, but their inhabitants, supposing that Spain was still ruled by the infidel, and fearing to be followed to their retreat, would allow no one who visited the island to return.

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Most visitors were quite willing to stay, for in that island the sand itself was one-third gold. During the life of Columbus, an inhabitant of the Canaries applied to King John of Portugal for a vessel, in which to search for these islands.

There is still to be heard a Portuguese tradition of the honored King Don Sebastian, who did not die, as was supposed, at the hands of Moors in 1578, but was carried by heavenly power safe to the "Hidden Island." There he awaits, sleeping, the time when he shall awake and return to rule among men. Two great gold lions watch over him and his companions. When the time comes they will lead him back to his own land. Once in many years, the clouds surrounding the islands part and allow true followers to see the slumbering king. He was thus seen, in the year 1610, armed, guarded, and slumbering. He has more than once been sought, and imposters impersonating him on his return have many times been welcomed.

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West of Ireland is a similar island which comes in sight once in seven years.

In short, there have been so many and such interesting tales of fabulous islands that they have repeatedly been made the subject of elaborate compilations. In 1845 d'Avezac published, at Paris, "Fantastic Islands of the Western Ocean in the Middle Ages." And but yesterday Thomas Wentworth Higginson issued his "Tales of the Enchanted Isles in the Atlantic." Some fortunate author may yet group the "Intimations in Literature of a Western Continent, before the Discovery of Columbus."

Among the fabulous islands of the older geography, the island of the holy St. Brendan played no insignificant rôle. It was sometimes placed west of Ireland and described as a place of hot and cold springs. More often,—usually, indeed—it was thought to form one of the Canary group, which first came to the acquaintance of modern Europe about the year 1300,

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when a French ship was driven upon one of them in a storm.

The fact that the isle was sometimes called "the island which is not found when one searches for it," epitomizes its history. There was no lack of searching, however. Portugal ceded it to Castile along with the Canaries, and Castile ceded it to one of her noblemen, on condition that he find it. Many persons sacrificed fortune, and some, life, in its search. Others abandoned the attempt, believing, not that it did not exist, but that it was rendered invisible by divine Providence or by diabolical magic.

It could be seen from the Canaries at intervals and in perfectly clear weather; its distance seemed to vary from fifteen to an hundred leagues. Many persons claimed to have seen it. Geographers located it upon their maps, usually about two hundred leagues west of the Canaries. It was so placed upon most of the maps and globes used by Columbus.

When it was found that the land he had dis-

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covered was not St. Brendan's Isle, expeditions in search of the latter place continued.

Ferdinando de Alvarez vainly traversed the whole region in 1526. But, soon after, belief was again revived by a Portuguese captain, who claimed to have landed there. He anchored in a cliff surrounded bay, found fresh water, and saw cattle, sheep, and giant foot-prints. A cross was found nailed to a tree, and some stones showed traces of camp fires. At the approach of night a storm swept the vessel away, leaving two men on the island, which by morning had vanished. Another captain, Marcus Verde, made a similar deposition before the Inquisition of the Grand Canary, and a French captain reported a similar experience.

Then came other voyages of search. Among them was one fitted out by the Portuguese government, sailing from Palma with the governor of the island as commandant. Still others set forth from the same place, though

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always with the same result. The latest on record was sent from Santa Cruz, by the governor of the Canaries, in 1721.

England was not without her belief in St. Brendan's Isle. It appeared on many English maps, and, once, a state criminal escaped from Ireland to the continent, under pretence of seeking it. Leslie of Glassborough, a man of judgment and enterprise, purchased a patent grant of the island from Charles I., and expended a fortune in vainly seeking it.

The usual explanation of an optical illusion is made, but it has been seriously suggested by the French Royal Geographical Society, that to the west of the Canaries there may have been a submarine volcano, which caused, from time to time, its crater to appear.

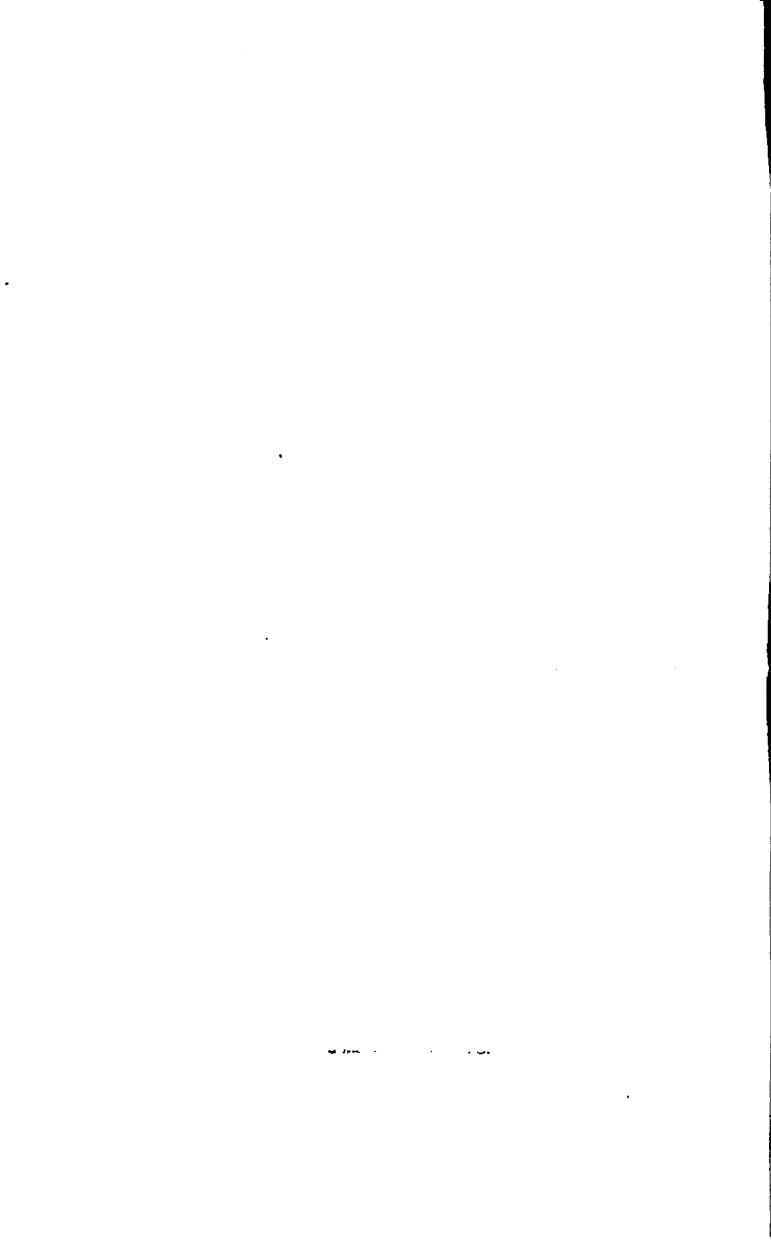
Aside from the geographical, historical, and literary interest of "The Voyage of St. Brendan," it possesses other and yet deeper values. Mr. Alfred Nutt has but recently traced, in the Brendan and related stories, the

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origin and growth of interesting attempts to solve some of the mysteries of human existence, by formulating independent conceptions of "The Happy Other-World" and "The Doctrine of Re-birth."

An Anglo-Saxon Saint :

Aldhelm



An Anglo-Saxon Saint.

Aldhelm

THE records of England in the seventh century afford surprising evidence of the extent of culture in the country at that early period. One reads that grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, astrology, mechanics, and medicine were studied. There are accounts of whole fleets of ships, filled with scholars seeking learning, plying between England and Ireland. The schools of Theodore, at Canterbury, were crowded with native and foreign students.

It was near the beginning of this seventh century that there came to England, from Ireland, which was at that time celebrated for its learning, a Scottish scholar who had there been

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seeking knowledge among the monastery schools; all the learning of the time being, of course, confined to the church. His name is variously written as Meldun, Meildulf, and Maildulf.

Attracted by the beauty of the woodland in Wiltshire, he settled there and began teaching. Students soon gathered about him and formed a monastic society, and the settlement became known as "Maildulf's burg," and grew, through a dozen centuries, into the Malmesbury of to-day.

Hither there came, from Wessex, to Maildulf's teaching, a certain Aldhelm, a relative of the royal family, and such a proficient in the study of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, in the arts of music, and in the rules of metre, that, although still a youth, he had astonished his teachers, Hadrian and Theodore, themselves.

Here, with the exception of a short visit to the school of Hadrian, Aldhelm remained. He was ordained a priest by Bishop Lothere,

and on Maildulf's resignation in 675, was created abbot in his stead.

Aldhelm's entrance into office was marked by increased prosperity for the monastery. New members came, even from distant parts of France and Scotland, and, if a German hypothesis is to be credited, among the students was Cynewulf, author of much that is best in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Through Aldhelm's influence, too, lands came into the possession of the abbey and gold flowed into its coffers, and soon was built the first of the several churches which owed their existence to him. It was dedicated to the Lord the Saviour, and to Peter and Paul, —favorite saints among the Anglo-Saxons of that age—and continued to be, for more than four centuries, the largest and most beautiful church in all England. St. Mary's and St. Michael's, in the same district, and a church near St. Aldhelm's, now St. Alban's, headland in Dorsetshire, all were built by him, and

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rarely good they must have been to be spared for their excellence, as they were, by the critical Norman architects.

The sources, it were well to say, from which most of the reliable information concerning the life and influence of Aldhelm come, are two in number, namely, original and yet untranslated Latin lives by William of Malmesbury, who lived from 1095 to 1142, and by Faricius, a foreign monk of Malmesbury, who became abbot of Abingdon in 1100, and died in 1117. The life by Faricius, of no great length and the less important, is criticised by the jealous Malmesbury, both because of the foreign point of view of the writer and because of his general inaccuracy. Malmesbury's work is of greater size and value. And it shows throughout deep love and reverence for Aldhelm, to whom, "next to the Deity Himself," the writer was most indebted.

It is concerning Aldhelm that Malmesbury

tells one of the old, old stories which are yet ever fresh and new. Baldly translated the story runs as follows:—"And Aldhelm was able also to make English poetry, and to compose songs which were good either to sing or to recite. And, indeed, King Alfred has recorded,—giving also the cause, to show very clearly why so great a man composed things which seem so frivolous—some trivial songs made by Aldhelm and sung to this very day by the common people.

"The people in those times being semi-barbarous (thus the twelfth century comments upon the seventh), and but little interested in sermons or divine things, it was the custom for wandering minstrels to go at once on their arrival throughout all the homes.

"Therefore the good man placed himself, as though he were one who practiced the art of minstrelsy, in sight of those passing over the bridge which joined the town and the country. In this way more than once he was

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rewarded with crowds of auditors and with the applause of the people. Having accomplished this, he gradually inserted words of Scripture among the frivolous things, and so persuaded into safety men of that city with whom by severity and threats of excommunication nothing could have been done."

The good abbot's delight and skill in music is otherwise stated and frequently. Faricius relates that he excelled on all kinds of instruments, and was as eager a musician as Saint Dunstan himself was reputed to be.

So prosperous grew Malmesbury Abbey that Aldhelm founded another at Frome, the church of which was still standing in Malmesbury's time, and yet another at Bradford on Avon, of which the church has survived in almost perfect preservation down to the present day.

Aldhelm's broadening reputation soon brought from the Pope an invitation to visit Rome. There he was entertained with high-

est honors and, returning, brought back with him letters of privilege for his monasteries, many relics, and a marble altar which he presented to King Ine, as a shrine for the royal relics.

The joy at his return was a proof of his popularity. Outside the city he was met by a procession; the monks singing and bearing relics and incense, the laymen dancing before him, and King Ine and King Ethelred giving sanction to the occasion by their royal presence.

Yet greater were the honors which came to him. In the autumn of 705, when the Bishopric of Sherbourne was created, all the orders and even the laity united to insist that Aldhelm accept the incumbency. And this, after much reluctance, he agreed to do. The members of Malmesbury and its dependent abbeys, however, refused to part with his services as their abbot, and so he was compelled to bear the double burdens of superior and bishop.

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Beside these increased labors he preached day and night, and practiced the most rigid asceticism. One of his customs was that of spending the night reciting the Psalms, standing up to his neck in water. The well of this performance still bears the bishop's name. It is not to be marveled at that such practices drained away his vital forces, and that, four years after his consecration, Bishop Aldhelm died.

He happened to be at Dulting in Somerset when he felt death draw near. Hastily assembling the clergy, he gave them a parting admonition, was carried into the little church of the village and there, seated upon a stone, breathed his last. It was on May 25th, A. D., 709. According to his wish, his body was laid to rest in St. Michael's at Malmesbury.

But Aldhelm's personal influence by no means ceased with death. Malmesbury remained one of the most famous seats of English learning until late in the Middle Ages, and

the good bishop's memory was conserved by many stories of his spiritual prowess.

Many miracles were attributed to him in life and death. Malmesbury prefaces his accounts of these by stating that he has proved their authenticity, and has not got them from common report alone, as the fathers did. Then he relates how, by the prayers of Aldhelm, a beam was miraculously lengthened until it fitted its place in a church which was being constructed. This beam was miraculously preserved, although the remainder of the church was twice destroyed by fire.

During the bishop's visit to Rome, his chasuble,—which Malmesbury afterward saw—was suspended in the air by a sunbeam. On the return from Rome the marble altar was accidentally broken and the animal which bore it crushed. Aldhelm restored both; the flaw in the marble is still visible.

At Dover, the bishop once saw sailors landing books and bargained for a copy of the

Bible. The sailors accused him of trying to beat down the price and rowed away. Soon they were caught in a storm. They appealed to Aldhelm for his pardon and aid. He made the sign of the cross and they reached the land in safety. The book was then offered as a gift, but the bishop insisted upon paying for it. The volume was seen by Malmesbury.

Once while preaching in the open air, he fixed his staff in the earth; miraculously it grew, many oak trees sprang from it, and, in commemoration of the wonder, the village was called "Bishop's-trees."

At the removal of his body from Dulting to Malmesbury many miraculous cures were effected. The bones of the saint were moved a number of times from tomb to shrine, and at each change miracles of healing were performed.

Demoniacs, paralytics, a bed-ridden woman, a blind fisherman, a blind woman, a cripple, a deformed youth, a dumb man, a girl with

spinal disease, a monk, and a nobleman, all were made whole at the tomb. A Danish invader, attempting to violate the shrine, was miraculously stricken down as though stabbed; his companions fled in terror.

The bishop's left arm, enshrined at Salisbury, was the means of restoring many to health and soundness. Even the churches he built were places of great miraculous power.

He was made a saint by the Roman Church. To him, along with a group of other worthies, May 25th has been assigned in the calendar.

The records, without exception, unite in praising Aldhelm's intellectual equipment as extraordinary. According to Faricius he could write and speak Greek like a native, excelled in Latin all scholars since the days of Virgil, was acquainted with Hebrew, and read the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament Scriptures in the original text. Bede considered him,—“a man most learned in every respect, being both polished in speaking and

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truly wonderful in knowledge of ecclesiastical and secular literature."

A letter of Aldhelm's, written while he was yet a student, to Bishop Hedda, gives interesting evidence of the range of his studies, and is, as well, an excellent example of his involved prose style. His industry must have been indeed astonishing, since all of the studies mentioned were pursued in addition to his daily duties as a Benedictine monk. He writes,—
"The statute of Roman law has been wholly gone through, and the entire study of lawyers to the profoundest depths has been examined into.

"And,—what is the more perplexing by far—it is the custom to repeat regularly the hundred kinds of metrical feet, and to go through, bit by bit, the proper modulation of syllables and of singing in music,—in the careful reading of these things, very much greater and more puzzling obscurity has to be groped through, as the number of things to be learned

grows greater. Yet the difficulties of these writings,—with regard to the confused arrangement of words—are the least things about which it is the custom to complain.

“In the same way, in the mysterious use of letters in the metrical arts, all is a confusion of syllables, feet, poetic figures, verses, tones, and times.

“And the study of poetry is also divided into seven divisions,—as, for example, the acefalos, the protilos,—with such names it is varied.

“The verses are some monoscemi, decascemi,—regular measures of feet—and in the same way catalectici, brachicalectici, and ipercatalectici verses, are carefully arranged in treatment.

“Such things as these, and things like them, by working a short time at intervals, I think nobody could understand.”

It is to be feared that at the writing of this letter, the young student was somewhat discouraged. Nor is it much to be wondered at.

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Aldhelm frequently evidences his wide, and, for a churchman, somewhat unusual reading by quoting in his writings, in addition to ecclesiastical authors, Horace, Lucan, Juvenal, Persius, Terrence, Ovid, and Virgil.

The list of Aldhelm's writings, all of which are in Latin and yet untranslated, is not extensive. His literary reputation rests almost wholly upon three of his books,—the Riddles, which were famed throughout the land, and the two treatises concerning celibacy as taught by the Roman Church, which remained favorite books until the Norman Conquest.

The work entitled "In Praise of Celibacy" or "Concerning the Celibacy of Saints" consists of an account of the lives, sufferings, and constancy of the saints and martyrs who had devoted themselves to lives of celibacy. It is written in a style considered to-day "flowery and, at times, bombastic, and affected," but of which Malmesbury said "nothing is more sweet, nothing more splendid."

The dedication is to Hildelinda, Abbess of Barking, and her friends, Aldgilda, Scholastica, Hidburga, Burgundia, and others, whom, after quoting Ovid and Virgil, the author addresses as "flowers of the church, sisters of holy living, foster-parents of learning, pearls of Christ, gems of paradise, and members of the heavenly country." Similar flattering language is used to Osgitha, Aldhelm's "most beloved sister." To her he writes,—“Farewell, oh most beloved, ten,—nay indeed—an hundred and an thousand fold.” It has been shown that among these nuns were some whose learning was but little inferior to that of Aldhelm himself.

After the dedication to the abbess and her household, the book exalts them as examples of celibacy, and then praises celibacy itself in prose which “coquettishly masquerades in all colors.” Praise of the learning, obedience, and zeal of the sisters follows. Then the difficulties in the way of the virtue,—“As honey exceeds

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all other sweetness, so does celibacy exceed all other virtues. Yet it should not bring spiritual pride, the worst of the eight principal sins."

Then "plucking the purple flowers of virtue from the meadows of the holy books, in order to weave, with the help of Christ, a most beautiful wreath of celibacy," the author gives a list of followers of the virtue from Elias, of the Old Testament; John the Baptist, of the New; and Pope Sylvester, of the Fathers; down to the time of the writer. After listing the holy women, from the Virgin down, he concludes by promising, if this work be pleasing, to treat the subject in verse.

The "In Praise of the Virtuous" fulfills this promise in "well-constructed and by no means unpoetical hexameters." The first and last letters of each of the thirty-eight lines of the preface are acrostically arranged to form the sentence,—“The verses arranged now form a holy song.”

The body of the work classifies mankind

from the point of view of celibacy, and shows the struggle against the principal sins, which are represented as generals commanding the army of the enemy. It prays the aid of the patron saints of celibacy against "evil-wishing critics who tear the writings of authors as with the beaks of ravens. Yet, trusting that only those are afraid of the arrows of speech who do not know how to protect the head with the helmet of metre, and the back with the armor of prose;" the author takes heart, and concludes with the hope that readers of both prose and verse may take his work kindly, and include him in their prayers.

Two short quotations may not be amiss,—

"For, as the rose excels the Tyrian dyes,
And all the gaudy colors worked by art;
As the pale earth the lucid gem creates
In rustic soil beneath the dusky glebe,
When spring revives the germinating earth:
So sacred celibacy, the dear delight
Of all the colonies of heaven, is born
From the rude appetites of worldly life."

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The last part of the work, sometimes called, "Concerning the Eight Principal Sins," contains these Miltonic lines,—

"The crowding legions gather to the war,
Justice's fair friends and virtue's holy troops;
'Gainst these the vices fix their camps malign,
And whirl their thickening spears of basest deeds.
The rival combat glows, the banners float,
And the loud clangor of the trumpet roars."

The letters, or epistles, of Aldhelm were greatly prized. Some, which contained advice to his subordinates, were read long after his death. For certain others concerning controversial topics, inspiration was even claimed.

Aldhelm is said to have translated the Psalms into Anglo-Saxon verse. If he really did so the work is probably irretrievably lost. Of it nothing is known.

To modern readers the "Ænigmata," or "Riddles," are of greatest interest, for it is here that Aldhelm comes most closely in touch with Anglo-Saxon literature and life. These

“Riddles” are also less inflated and more natural in style, than any of his other writings.

The work in which they are contained begins with a “Little Preface.” This contains a consideration of the mystic meanings of the number seven, exhortations to fraternal love, accounts of Symphosius and Aristotle, whose works suggested the collection; a consideration of the personification of lifeless things, with Biblical examples; and a discussion concerning the writing of Latin hexameter verses. This last is in the form of a dialogue between teacher and pupil, here used, it is said, for the first time by an English writer.

Then come the Riddles, and then more dialogue, in which all the verse feet are considered and accent is touched upon. The book concludes with a letter of personal suggestions to King Alfred of Northumbria,—the whole volume is entitled “Epistle to Alfred,”—in which Aldhelm urges him to read the book through. His argument is that “it

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would be absurd if you did not take the trouble to chew and re-chew, that which I have taken so much pains to grind and knead for you."

The first and last letters of the first thirty-six lines of this introduction are acrostically arranged to read,—“Aldhelm sang an ode of a thousand verses.” Doubtless this indicates that the original collection of Riddles contained one thousand lines. Not quite three-fourths of these remain.

Among the Riddles, which are in a dozen different forms, are those upon earth, wind, fire, cloud, nature, the elements, the rainbow, the moon, salt, heliotrope, silkworms, the peacock, the salamander, the bee, the ostrich, dove, fish, locust, bat, cat, beaver, swallow, crow, unicorn, a man born blind, the organ, the lighthouse, the writer's pen, and one on all creation.

As an example of the Riddles may be quoted a single very characteristic one,—

“ Me, dead white, long ago the shining pelican brought forth,
Who, with an open throat, from the pit’s depth, sup up
the waters.
Through the white plain I march, without any crook in
the footpath,
And o’er the bright white way, I leave my dark-blue
footprints,
Darkening lustrous fields, with the blackness of twisting
and turning.
Nor does it yet suffice that the plains are traversed by
one track,
But to a thousand paths is rather the byway extended,
Which them who do not stray has led to the summit of
heaven.”

The solution is: “ The writer’s pen.”

The Anglo-Saxon poet, Cynewulf, without doubt, sometimes used Aldhelm’s Riddles as a basis for his own, though this by no means destroys the originality and true national feeling of the latter.

A comparison of one of Aldhelm’s Riddles with one of those based upon it by Cynewulf, is of interest.

Aldhelm wrote,—“ What fierce soldier sustains in battle so much hardship or so many

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death-wounds?"—the answer being: "The shield."

Cynewulf wrote,—

"I am all alone, with the iron wounded,
With the sword slashed into, sick of work of battle,
Of the edges weary. Oft I see the slaughter,
Oft the fierceful fighting. Of no comfort ween I,—
So that in the battle-brattling help may bring itself to
me;
Ere I, with the warriors, have been utterly foredone.
But the heritage of hammers, hews adown at me,
Stark of edges, sworded-sharp, of the smiths the handi-
work,
On me biting in the burgs! Worse the battle is.
I must bear forever! Not one of the leechkin,
In the folk stead, could I find out,
Who with herbs he has, then should heal me of my
wound.
But the notching on my edges more and more becomes
Through the deadly stroke of swords, in the daylight, in
the night."

In discussing the work of Aldhelm as a whole, critics have generally agreed. Adolf Ebert points out in his work "two notable peculiarities, one arising from his education, the other from his nationality, the one a tend-

ency to sprinkle his writing with Latinized Greek expressions,—a possible following of his teachers, Theodore and Hadrian—the other the great love of alliteration found very commonly in the verse, and frequently in the prose and the Riddles.” This use of alliteration is due, no doubt, to the influence of the native poetry. Bernhard ten Brink found that,—“In the choice of his material, . . . manner of treating it, . . . observation of nature and human feeling, . . . aversion to what was gross and common, in his leaning to amplification and poetical digression, he proves an intimate relationship with that side of the Old English national character and . . . poesy which was . . . developed by Christianity.” His style, to Stopford Brooke, “is always fantastic, pompous, and full of rhetorical tricks . . . and his fancifulness often degenerates into a fastidious pedantry.” “We see in his work,” says Thomas Wright, “often unhappy choice of words, harsh sentences, and some-

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times a deficiency in true delicacy and harmony." And "Often," writes John Richard Green, "the real quickness of his wit and perception of natural beauty must struggle with a fatal luxuriance of metaphor and rhetoric."

But notwithstanding all these faults of style which make Aldhelm's work the hardest reading in mediæval Latin, his popularity and influence were great indeed. A host of writers have praised him extravagantly.

King Alfred placed him first in the rank of vernacular poets. One can only imagine the value of his Anglo-Saxon writings. They are all lost beyond hope of recovery.

But great as is their loss to the world, their influence lived long after them. For, "These songs of Aldhelm led the way in that upgrowth of popular poetry which was soon to fill the land with English verse; when creed, prayer, riddle, allegory, acrostic, Bible-story, and moral saw, the longing of the exile, the

toil of the seaman, the warning of the grave,
passed alike into verse."

And hence Aldhelm is often called "The
Father of Anglo-Saxon poetry."

•

The Oldest English Poem :
The Beowulf

The Oldest English Poem :

The Beowulf

"It is never a blithe and gladsome tale that is told by those who dwell by the sounding sea. More than the inhabitants of any other region are they begirt by solemn immensities that will not be shut out. The mountain tells its message to the eye only, and waits in silent grandeur for the world asleep. But the sea never lets itself be forgotten. Both eye and ear it woos incessantly. And so it comes to be an ever present undertone in the thought of those who hear it, and their own songs, whether they will or not, are pitched to the minor cadences of the sea."

Much of the poetry of the English language has the sea for its subject, and there has been traced the same mingling of melancholy and

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exultation in all of this, since, in early Anglo-Saxon times, were composed the Riddles, the Seafarer, and the Beowulf.

Embarking, voyaging, and disembarking are so vividly described in this oldest of English poems, the Beowulf, that one almost sees the single-masted and single-sailed open boats, from the beginning of their journeys on until the harbor, sheltered by the high cliffs, is safely reached. Nor do such incidents exhaust the characteristics which connect the Beowulf with the sea; the whole poem is full of it. Beowulf, himself a sea-rover, a fighter with sea-monsters, and a mighty swimmer, is a leader of men who are all sea-folk; all the action is laid upon the coast, while the inland is unknown and dreaded.

This permeation with the perception of the sea and sea life, by its mention, serves to suggest the manner in which not the sea only but also other forms of nature, influenced the thought and life of the Northmen. Stones,

springs, trees, hills, and many other natural objects likewise received veneration. The sun's overcoming of the night and the night's overcoming of the sun so impressed the minds of these men that they, as those in the south-land, invented for these phenomena symbolic stories. Since, also, there were but two seasons, winter and summer, there arose typical stories of a recurring battle between destroying frost and storm giants and bright beings who bore with them life and fruitfulness.

It is, of course, always easy to push such parallelisms farther than did the simple-minded people among whom they arose, but it seems allowable to trace to such natural sources some, perhaps, indeed much, of the mythical religion of the early Teutonic peoples. The terrors stimulated by winter, frost, storm, mist, and darkness, becoming combined with superstitious fear of the aboriginal dwellers in the land, gave rise to beliefs in malignant giants and ogresses who inhabited wastes and crags

and caves; beliefs in elves of the wood, and in demons of the sea and land. Naturally such imaginary beings as these were objects of fear and hatred, rather than of worship.

Men, too, who, early in the history of the race, had been founders of tribes and heroes of agriculture or war, were supposed, even after death, to retain an interest in their people, and, in progress of time, they grew more and more toward the rank of divinities of an ancestor worship.

Portions of all these mythic, legendary, natural, and historical elements often combined into sagas of story. The historical overthrow of the Burgundians by the Huns, and the death of Attila combined with the myth of Sigifrid, to form the story known to us in the German Nibelungenlied. In the same way, the overthrow of the Geat King Hygelac combined with the old Beowa myth, to form the Anglo-Saxon saga of Beowulf. In course of development of such stories incident and detail

would be added from other sagas, to which, in turn, were given incident and detail. As a result, it has become impossible to trace out the narrative of any single saga without discovering a connection between all the great cycles, similar to that existing in the Greek and Roman mythology. There are, for example, between the Beowulf and the Icelandic Grettir saga, parallels so close that some of the details must either have been borrowed from one or other of the stories, or have been obtained from sources common to both.

A number of the royal families of Sweden, Denmark, and England have traced their origin to the hero of a myth, which celebrates the man who first taught agriculture, and established government and law among his peoples. Once upon a time, this story goes, near the place where the gods had made man and woman out of trees, which had floated in from the great ocean, there was seen a richly-adorned open boat drawing near the land. Within,

asleep upon a sheaf of wheat and surrounded by jewels and implements, was found a small boy. This newcomer was gladly welcomed by the people, who called him Scef or Sceaf, because of the sheaf, and made him their king. He ruled so nobly that at his death there was universal lamentation. By common consent the king's body, together with a heap of treasure, was placed in the boat in which he had arrived, and the whole was set loose to sail back whence it at first had come.

From this Scef was said to have descended Scyld, who came in the same manner as his father, except that he is sometimes said to have been resting upon not a sheaf, but a shield. This may have been a symbol of his prowess in war. From Scyld descended many illustrious heroes, among them Scylf, founder of the Scylfings or Swedes; Geat, founder of the Geats; and of Danes, a long line down to Healfdene and Hrothgar of the Beowulf story.

At one period of his life this King Hrothgar

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was served by a thegn named Ecgtheow, a warrior famous for his wisdom and valor. Returning to King Hrethel, a master whom he had formerly served, Ecgtheow was given the king's only daughter to wife. To them was born a son called Beowulf. The boy was so much beloved by his grandfather, Hrethel, that he was made equal to Herebeald, Haethcyn, and Hygelac, the aged king's own sons. By a sad accident one of these sons, Haethcyn, killed his elder brother Herebeald. Intense grief at the event caused the death of old Hrethel, who, as a parting gift, left to Beowulf the world-famous coat of mail made by Weland, the great smith. More misfortune came to the unhappy Haethcyn, for, in revenge upon Ohtere and Onela, sons of Ongentheow, for ravaging some of his lands, he carried away their young mother. The terrible old king Ongentheow, in pursuit, recaptured his wife and killed her abductor. The victim Haethcyn's remaining brother, Hygelac, with

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his allies, killed Ongentheow, whose grandson retaliated by killing Hygelac's son Heardred. When these grandsons of Ongentheow were in turn killed by Beowulf, the feud rested for a time, although promising to break out once more when death should remove the restraining hand of Beowulf.

In many such deeds Beowulf bore a part before he made the expedition to the court of Hrothgar, recorded in the first cycle of the poem. Between the first and second parts of the story more than fifty years, filled with such events, intervened. It is always to be remembered that the poem of Beowulf, as we have it, gives account of but a very few incidents in the life of a man who was the hero of so many; who is so inextricably interwoven in the vast web of Teutonic saga.

There has, perhaps, never been in the history of literature another single document which has stimulated so much interest and comment as the single manuscript which transmits to us

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the poem of Beowulf. After seven or eight centuries of oblivion, it was found in 1705, by the scholar Wanley, who was making a catalogue of all the old northern books in England. The manuscript is written on parchment, in the handwriting of two copyists of the beginning of the tenth century. It is now in the British museum in London. A full hundred years after the discovery, the first account of the poem was given in Turner's "History of the Anglo-Saxons," and in 1815 Thorkelin, a Danish scholar, published the text. In 1823 Turner and in 1826 Conybeare, made fuller accounts, translating portions into English verse, and, in 1833 and 1837, John Kemble edited and translated the whole. Thus the interest of scholars was attracted, and the poem given to the world. So many editions, translations, and comments have since been written in English, German, French, and Danish, that to-day there must be a book, or thesis, or essay, or article, for every one of the 3,183 lines of the poem.

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The main incidents in the story of the poem are:—the building of Hrothgar's great hall, Heorot, with the joy of the warriors within its walls; the murderous visits of the monster Grendel and the terror thus caused, the arrival of Beowulf and his followers, their reception by Hrothgar, Beowulf's struggle with Grendel, the victory over him and his mother, the public rejoicing at the cleansing of the hall,—these events form the first part of the story. In the second part Beowulf is an old man, having ruled over the Geats for many years since the death of Hygelac. He undertakes a last difficult contest in attempting to conquer the fiery, land-wasting dragon who guards a treasure in a cavern by the sea. The dragon is overcome, but in the struggle the hero is mortally wounded and dies upon the scene of conflict. His body is burned, and over the ashes his warriors raise a mound which serves as a beacon for the seamen.

As we have seen, some of the myth incor-

porated in the story probably arose among the hardy, daring Northmen to whom the mists of the moors and the storms of the raging sea, were terrors, in the winter time. Welcome summer, the deliverer, may have been personified as the hero Beowulf overcoming the raging sea and the poisonous mists, in the persons of the giant Grendel and the monster dragon.

Those, however, who make the whole poem of Beowulf and all the persons in it mythical, go too far toward forgetting the slow upbuilding of the material: toward forgetting that there are included as well historical elements. The mention by the sixth century chronicler Gregory of Tours of a certain king Chochilaicus, has suggested an identification of this historical personage with the Hygelac of the poem. About the years 515 to 520 A. D., this royal viking Chochilaicus, or Hygelac as we may now call him, went forth from the southern part of Sweden upon a plundering expedition. From this he was returning successful when

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he was overtaken, his forces routed, all the plunder captured, and himself slain by a band of Franks and Frisians led by Theudebert, son of the Frankish king Theodoric. All of this was not accomplished without a fierce struggle in which many of Hygelac's followers displayed such great prowess that their deeds grew famed in story. One of them, son of Ecgtheow and nephew of Hygelac, revenged his uncle's death by overcoming his slayer, and became known as such a famous hero that, first of his part in this struggle, and then of all his deeds, most marvelous tales were told and sung. By the time of his death, about 570 A. D., these tales and songs had spread over south Sweden and Denmark, among Geats, Danes, Angles, and, possibly, among the Saxons, and to them there were then joined stories older than the historic hero. Among these added glories was an ancient myth concerning a divine hero Beowa, mentioned in our poem's introduction as one of the ancestors of Hrothgar

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the Dane. This hero was the real conqueror of Grendel and the dragon, but, as time passed, his deeds were transferred to the historic Beowulf, whose story had grown to almost epic proportions.

To the original incidents, details, matters of description, accounts of ancestors and battles, myth, history, and saga all were added, together with many elements which belong to commonly extended folk-lore. The story was well under way when the coming of Christianity, either in course of natural development or by deliberate influence, introduced Christian teaching into the poem, mingling it with the heathen belief.

Immediately after writing began to be used in England as an ordinary vehicle of thought, there followed upon the Latin literature which sprang up, attempts in the vernacular English, and songs which already existed began to be put into writing. In such a recording of the Beowulf tradition the trusting to memory gave

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rise to discrepancies of detail and variations of the same theme. The scribes also, in addition to their copying, attempted, in some places, to smooth away imperfections and inequalities, to fill up gaps in the narrative, to give motive to disconnected passages, and, usually being ecclesiastics, to introduce Christian ideas.

Many of the theories suggested to explain the mode of composition of the *Beowulf* have been no more satisfactory than that of Thorke-lin, who thought it a Danish poem, or that of Thorpe, who considered it a translation of an eleventh century Swedish work. One of the most ingenious of these hypotheses is that according to which Earl supposes that the poem, as it stands, was made at the court of Offa, for the purpose of instructing the young Ecgferth in princely duties.

Following the Wolffian scholars, who first suggested that the Homeric poems were composed from vernacular songs, the German critic Lachmann criticised the *Nibelungenlied*

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in the same way. Ettmüller and Müllenhoff applied the method to the *Beowulf*, discovering in it many interpolations, and resolving it into its ultimate songs. Those who accept this theory believe that based upon two old lays by different authors, were a continuation of one of the lays and a general introduction to the whole, each from different hands. A fifth person is thought to have revised, adding and selecting to suit his pleasure. He was followed by a sixth person who increased the poem by episodes from other sagas, and from Christian sources.

If critics are all to be credited, the poem was written in even more places than Homer was born. While one writer argues from descriptions and scenery for England, others, from the persons and names, decide to place it in Sweden or Denmark. Agreeing with the larger number upon a continental origin, the question of date, a yet more complex one, confronts us. Although the date of the final draft can be ap-

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proximated, a writer may locate the gathering of the lays into a cycle anywhere in the second five hundred years of the Christian era, without greatly exciting the scorn of scholars.

But, turning aside from the problems, of which many remain unsolved, we shall at least be safe in thinking that the poem was not formed by an accidental gathering of lays, but that there was one poet who was, apparently, a Christian and, certainly, an artist. This poet took the old songs, recast them and formed them into a whole, embodying other episodes; he conceived the character of Beowulf and made him the central motive, and with deliberate artistic and, possibly, ethical purpose, wrote the poem very much as we have it to-day.

From a literary point of view the Beowulf has never been considered one of the great poems of the world, but it does stand alone in its own realm; if there were similar poems in vernacular English the judgment of time has not seen fit to preserve them.

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Although the poem, except for certain evident interpolations, is thoroughly pagan, yet a simple and noble moral feeling prevails throughout, in the conception of manly greatness and virtue, of undismayed courage, of stoical encounter with death, of silent submission to fate, and of readiness to help others.

There is not much imagination in the poem, except by direct vision of the thing or situation which is described, by rapid and direct presentation. Form is very much lacking and the whole is neither well nor evenly woven; the first part is much better than the second which is often badly broken.

Yet it is wrong to bring our criticism to the poem without always bearing in mind the conditions under which it was composed for oral recitation only, and remembering that it may almost be called an accident that we have it transmitted at all, in literary form. Then we will continually appreciate how good it really

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is, and how much of a heritage we have received in it.

The opening monologue of the poem, in its praise of the mythical Scyld, son of Scef, and his rule, brings a high code and doctrine of heroic behavior before the hearer, as the mark up to which is to measure the hero of the poem, when he shall appear upon the scene.

Rapidly passing other kings and their reigns the poet reaches Healfdene and his great son Hrothgar. Hrothgar's honor in battle rallying many warriors round him, his group of youthful retainers increased to a great band of men. Then,—

“ It came into his mind

That he a great hall would then command,
A greater mead-hall, his men to build,
Than children of men ever had heard of,
And there within would he all deal out
To young and to old, as God him gave.”

In course of time this greatest of halls,
Heort or Heorot, arose, lofty and pinnacled,
and within Hrothgar spoke wisdom in his

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councils and, at the feasting, generously dealt out treasure.

Without pause in epic rapidity the poem suggests that this happiness is not to be of long duration, because of the hatred of a powerful evil spirit. But the evil is not yet come and meanwhile in the hall there is joy, with sound of harp and minstrels' song.

A trick of the poet produces strong artistic effect by changing suddenly from this account of happy life, to a description of the destroying demon who held the moor and fen. Seeking at night the great hall, and finding there the Danes, sleeping, after the feasting, he became accustomed to take his fill of bloody slaughter, and return, before the morning, to his den. One of the frequent contrasts between the joy of the evening and the sorrow of the morning is brought in when the bloody work of the demon is first known. Night after night for twelve long years the depredations continued, and then the great hall stood

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empty. The sorrowful condition of affairs was widely known, yet no remedy offered, and the demon became so bold that he made the deserted hall his constant abode at night.

At length the news of this dreadful distress, loathsome and lasting, came, far across the waters, to Beowulf, thegn of Hygelac and strongest of men. He, at once providing a ship and trusty companions, started to the rescue,—

“Then the well-geared heroes
Stepped upon the stem, while the stream of ocean
Whirled against the sand. To the ship, to its breast,
Bright and carved things of cost carried then the heroes,
And the armor well arrayed. So the men outpushed,
On desired adventure, their tight ocean wood.
Swiftly went the waves with a wind well-fitted,
Likest to a fowl, that floater, foam around its neck;
Till about the same time on the second day,
The up-curved prow had come on so far,
That at last the seamen saw the land ahead;
Shining sea-cliffs, soaring head-lands,
Broad sea-nesses. So the sailor of the sea
Reached the sea-way's end.”

While landing, the warriors were hailed

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from the cliffs above by the sea-guard of the Danes, enquiring who the strangers were and what errand brought them. Catching a glimpse of their leader, his admiration escaped him and he shouted,—

“Never saw I greater
Earl upon this earth than is one of you;
Hero in his harness 'Sooth, he is no common man,
Less his looks belie him, lordly with his weapons
Noble in his air!”

Learning the errand of the warriors, the guard gladly directs them upon their way, and promises to protect the ship until they return victorious. Then on, and inland, the staunch band marched under their fierce boar-crested helmets, and, at length, saw the greatest of all halls standing in the distance.

The long, high-roofed, wooden building, with gable ornaments of stag horns, and the ridge covered with metal which glittered in the sun, rose in the centre of a cultivated plain.

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About the hall lay the village, with the dwelling of the king and the homes of his people. Around the village, were broad and cultivated meadows; beyond these lay the great moorland, covered with forest, hovered over by mists, roamed by wild animals, and ruled by demons.

Within the hall, at one end upon a high seat, King Hrothgar sat enthroned, beside him was his queen, about them the royal attendants. At the foot of the throne, or "gift-stool," sat Hunferth the speaker, and on benches by the tables, heavy with boar's flesh and venison and cups of ale and mead, were the thegns of Hrothgar. In the midst of the floor, paved with variegated stones, upon long hearths great fires were piled; the smoke, ascending, escaped through openings in the roof. Upon the walls hung many weapons; gilding and carved walrus bone adorned the roof and the supporting columns.

Entering the hall and advancing toward the

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throne with dignity; bravely, boldly, and concisely Beowulf recounted his hearing of Hrothgar's need, stated his prowess in former contests with monsters and giants, and craved the king's permission to encounter the demon Grendel in the hope of cleansing the land. He is, determined too, since Grendel reck's nôt for weapons, to meet the foe in hand to hand struggle; fate shall determine the battle as it will.

Old Hrothgar bids Beowulf be doubly welcome, for he bears well in mind the hero's brave father. He recalls with him his own days of youth and strength and, coming again to the great sorrow of his life, the deeds of Grendel, he exhorts all his followers to be joyful, now that the deliverer is come. Beowulf's Geat warriors mingled with the Danes about the tables,—

“And the Scop, from time to time,
Chanted, clear, in Heorot. There was cheer of heroes.”

But to this hall joy there comes an interrup-

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tion, and for it we are not unthankful, since through the event introduced it is possible to form some conception of the youthful days of Beowulf.

Hunferth, the king's feast companion, has become jealous of this new hero and, to lessen his repute, accuses him of having been beaten in a swimming contest by Breca, prince of the Brondings. Beowulf, indignant, charges that Hunferth, drunk with mead, has told a base untruth. Then, to free himself from the accusation, he relates the true account of the youthful adventure. It seems that it was not uncommon for young men to challenge one another to fight, in the winter time, with the whale, the seal, and the walrus. Five nights Breca and Beowulf spent thus together upon the open sea until, separated by storms, they were driven into the very haunts of the monsters. Here a great sea-beast attacked Beowulf and drew him toward the bottom of the sea. In a struggle, he succeeded in stabbing

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the monster, and rose again to the surface. It was only to find himself in a herd of similar enemies. Fighting fiercely he killed nine of them and, when the day dawned, found himself, weary, washed upon the shore of the Frisian land.

Upon concluding his account, Beowulf, in retaliation, publicly reminded Hunferth of his dishonor as the murderer of his own brother, and suggested that if he were half so fierce as he reckoned himself to be, Grendel would long ago have been conquered. The character of Hunferth was shown by a few selected words in his speech; so Beowulf's pride is made evident in his statement that while Grendel's depredations had been not at all interfered with by the weak Danes, now that he and his Geats were come, the outrages should cease.

Already it is possible from the poem to form some conception of the life of the time. It is evident that the kings were grave and

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stately, both in bearing and in speech. They were approached with fitting ceremony; they respected, and were respected by, their followers. The women of the court were trusted and loved by their husbands, the nobles, and the people. Proud and dignified, they were yet generous and gentle. As ladies of the feast they welcomed the guests, enjoyed the boasting of the heroes, and did honor by offering the mead cup and distributing gifts. Queens acted as regents until their sons were reared, and it was in their power to even dispose of the kingdom.

Extreme courtesy ruled in the royal circles; it is to be noted that such rudeness to a guest as that shown by Hunferth, is explained as due to the action of jealousy and drink upon a character already violent, even to the slaying of a kinsman. Hospitality and generosity, feasting and the giving of gifts, were duties as well as privileges.

The frequent mention of the mead cup has

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given rise to exaggerated opinions concerning the extent of the hard drinking. In reality, throughout Anglo-Saxon poetry, the man who became intoxicated was disgraced.

At the close of the evening feast Beowulf ~~renewed his boast to conquer~~ Grendel or to fall in the attempt, and, the Danes departing, Hrothgar entrusted the hall to the guard of the hero and his men.

The narrative now changes to the ogre-like demon Grendel, the destroyer, who, fierce, ravenous, furious, and hating all mankind, roams abroad at night,—

“From the moorland came, under misty hills,
Grendel ganging on! Wrath of God he bore,
’Neath the clouds he strode.”

He well knew the way to the hall and, wrenching the door from its fastenings, he now entered mad and loathsome. Joyful at seeing so many victims, the hungry monster seized,—

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"A sleeping warrior, him tore' unresisting,
Bit his bone-frame, drank blood from his veins,
In great bites him swallowed; soon then he had,
Deprived of life, him all devoured,
Feet even and hands."

Then he laid hold upon the leader who was lying next, but the ready Beowulf seized him in return with a hand grip greater than any other in the earth. The demon, surprised, struggled to escape; Beowulf grasped more tightly till his fingers cracked. In the swaying of the fighters the great hall groaned and creaked. The monster's horrid cries resounded through the place. Still the hero held him. The trusty warriors came close around and sought to wound the demon but without success, since no weapon harmed him. Beowulf persisted and the victory was his. Although the demon finally escaped to his fen it was but to die there from his wounds; he left his arm and shoulder torn away, within the hero's grasp.

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When the morning broke, many warriors came early to the hall. They saw there the arm and shoulder with the horrid claw and, on their horses, followed the tracks the dying monster had made, down to the shore where the lashing water was full of waves of blood.

In due time the king appeared,—

“From his bridal-bower did the ward of hoards of gold
Mighty, march in glory; muckle was his troop.
Known by worth he was, and, with him, his queen,
With a many of her maids, measured down the meadow
path.”

Hrothgar ascended his high seat in the hall, first giving devout thanks to God for the deliverance, and then, seconded by all his followers, heaping highest praise upon Beowulf the victor. The damage done the building was speedily repaired, the hall was richly decorated, and a mammoth feast was held. Here, all the hall was full and, amid rejoicing, Beowulf was presented with a golden banner, a helmet, a coat of mail, and a great treasure

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sword. Eight good steeds too, with King ~~Hrothgar's~~ own saddle, were given the leader; for each of the Geat warriors there was a sword, and there was blood money for the relatives of the man who had been killed by Grendel.

Many stirring tales of Finn and the Fight at Finnsburgh, of Sigemond and of Heremond, were chanted by the minstrels. To the hero's other honors ~~the queen~~ added that of her favor, offering him the cup of mead, thanking him for the victory, praying his friendship for her sons, and presenting rings, arm ornaments, a coat of mail, and the greatest jeweled collar of which the world had ever heard.

The joy continued long into the night and, when the tables were removed, the hall was filled with sleeping warriors, fearless now of harm as in the days of yore. The hero took his well-earned rest in a separate chamber.

But now, once more, sleep was broken by the coming of a demon, this time Grendel's

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mother, vowing bloody vengeance on the destroyers of her son. All the warriors aroused quickly drew their swords, yet not in time to prevent the monster laying hold upon one of their number, and escaping with him to the fen.

Sorely in the morning the good king wept at this misfortune, for the victim was Aeschere, his trusty counsellor. Beowulf, however, believing rather in avenging a friend than in bewailing his loss, promises to attack this demon too. Hrothgar, once more hopeful, leads on horse the way to a dark land where the trees lean over a gloomy pool, into which the stag will not venture even though he be hotly pursued by the hunter. By this haunted place the bloody head of the unfortunate Aeschere is found, and in the water repulsive monsters swim.

Beowulf is girded with his trusty armor and helmeted; he takes the famous sword Hrunting, offered by the orator Hunferth, now re-

pentant for his rudeness, and, after a short farewell, plunges into the surging waters.

Beating aside the tusks of the sea beasts, the hero fought his way far down into the abyss; forcing through a rocky passage he began to rise, and, finally, found himself in a high, arched cavern extending inland under the rocks, lit and aired by crevices in the roof, and floored with dry sand.

He had scarcely time to notice these details, together with the weapons on the walls, and the treasure scattered about, when he was grasped by the terrible claws of the monster to seek whom he had come. This grasp, because of his armor, failed to injure him, but soon in the fighting his noble sword failed him and, throwing it from him, the doughty warrior trusted once more to his mighty hand grip.

Quickly the monster was thrown, but, losing foothold, down went Beowulf in turn. Only his strong corselet again saved him from

the enemy's short sword. Struggling upright, the hero quickly grasped from among the treasures a sword, mightier than any other man could bear. Wielding this with might, he at length hewed in two the demon's body.

Her death being compassed, Beowulf breathed more freely. Looking about him at his leisure, he discovered the dead body of Grendel and, with effort, severed the head from the trunk.

Meanwhile, above upon the shore, Hrothgar and his men gazed long upon the troubled waters, watching with apprehension the staining of the waves with blood, fearing for the hero. Then gazing gave way to despair and, having watched from day till dark, the warriors departed sick at heart, leaving only the loyal men of Beowulf, devoid of hope, yet unwilling to leave their watching.

Beowulf having now thoroughly examined the mighty treasure in the cavern, prepared to ascend. Bearing the sword hilts,—the blades

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had melted in the poisonous blood of the demons—and the head of Grendel, he finally reached the surface.

Glad were now his warriors; thrusting a spear through the knotted hair of Grendel so that four of the strongest men might bear the gory head, all, joyful, went back to Hrothgar's hall.

After the storm of rejoicing upon their entrance had calmed, Beowulf in modest words related his last adventure, and another feast and present giving was celebrated. His mission was now accomplished and, on the morrow, the hero and his men departed, laden with presents, and followed by the farewells of old Hrothgar and his grateful people.

With an account of the return voyage, the greeting by Hygelac and his queen Hygd, and the reward bestowed by them upon Beowulf, the first part of the poem closes.

For fifty years since the death of Hygelac,

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Beowulf has been king; he is an old man when we again meet him in the second part of the poem, the last third in extent.

Now a warrior who, by chance, discovered a treasure cave while its dragon guard was sleeping, took a red gold cup from the hoard which had lain undisturbed since, three hundred years before, it had been hidden by a dying prince, the last of his people. The dragon was full of wrath at the disturbing of his treasure and, waiting only until the night, went forth consuming with his fiery breath houses, crops, and people, devastating the land. Before day he was again hidden securely in his lair.

The aged Beowulf, still his people's guardian, prepared to meet the dragon and avenge the ravage by destroying the monster. He seemed, however, to anticipate a fatal result for the battle, and, in a long address, recalled his many deeds of warlike prowess, his destroying of Grendel and his mother, and was

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saddened by the thought that, of all his kinsmen, none was left to survive him.

Experience had shown him life as a grim, sad thing. It had also fixed his courage for desperate adventure; while calm, grave, and gentle, he was so resolute in accomplishing his undertakings that he had long been known as "the firm-minded prince." Swift in wrath, brave in blood-feud, not private nor hasty in vengeance, forgetful of wrong: for these traits he, after the fashion of all Northmen, praised himself. Refusing the kingdom tendered to him at his lord's death to train up instead the old king's son, guarding him, and avenging him when slain: by these things had Beowulf proved himself upright in honor, truth, and faithfulness. As a king, generous, just, a wise politician, a defender of his people, a winner of treasure, ~~and a builder of peace,~~ he had been an heroic example of a warrior and a monarch.

Arriving at the den of the dragon, Beowulf,

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strong-hearted, shouted in his anger. Soon, in response, there came first the fiery breath, and then the monster dragon himself, rushing upon the challenger. Plying his trusty sword until its edge turned, the hero was all encircled by the seething flames of the dragon. This so terrified his followers that all of them except Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, fled and basely left their lord.

But Wiglaf, shouting courage, joined the aged hero just as his sword was shattered. The dragon was sorely wounded, but in turn had grasped Beowulf so tightly about the throat that his hold was scarcely loosed when, mangled by Wiglaf's thrusts and hacked entirely in two by the many blows of Beowulf's short sword, he fell dead.

Scarcely was the dragon slain when Beowulf, all exhausted, fell with life ebbing away through his poisoned wounds. There was barely time for the younger man to lave the hoary head of the dying king and to bring to

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his view some of the priceless captured treasure. Rejoicing that the dreaded enemy was dead and that his people should obtain such great treasure, although it cost his own life, the dying king prayed that above his ashes might be raised a mound which should come to be a beacon for the seamen. Then, giving his armor to his loyal supporter and resigning himself to his fate; as a noble hero, Beowulf breathed his last.

Wiglaf gazed with sorrow on his beloved sovereign. He had but angry scorn for the coward deserters, who now returned to see what the end of the struggle had been.

Willingly the people obeyed their dear lord's last wish and, amid the sound of a mighty mourning, the body of Beowulf, surrounded by helmets, shields, and corselets was placed upon the funeral pyre,—

“ In the midst thereof the mighty famous king,
 Their beloved lord, mourning, laid the warriors.
 Then the hugest of the Bale fires 'gan the heroes waken

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High upon the hill, and the smoke of wood arose
Dark above the seething fire, while the hissing sound of
flame

Was with weeping woven, for the wail of wind was still,—
'Till the fire had broken house of bone in twain,
Hot upon his breast. . . .

Heaven devoured the smoke.

Then the Wader-folk worked upon that place,
On the hanging cliff, a mound that was high and broad,
By the farers on the waves far and wide to be descried,
And, within a ten of days, they upbuilded there
For that Battle-fierce a beacon, and that best of Brands
With a wall they wrought around, as most worthily his
men,

All the men of wisest mind might imagine it.
And they put into that barrow armlets and bright gems,
And the precious things of price; all things from the hoard
The high-hearted men late had heaved away;
Let the earth hold fast of the earls the treasure,
Gold within the grit-wall, where it now abideth,
Of as little use to men as of old it was.
Then about the barrow rode the Lords of battle,
Twelve in all were they, children of the noblest,
Who could speak their sadness, tell their sorrow for their
king."

In order to appreciate something of the effect the song of Beowulf must have had as it was presented to the people among whom

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it grew up, one must imagine how the ancient minstrel chanted it in the mead hall, in the evening before the gathered warriors, who in bold adventure had many times risked existence, who were, perhaps, preparing then for other journeys. In the lofty building, with the mead cups passing, and the king presiding, noble on his throne seat, one may hear the minstrel, striking harp and chanting, as before king Hrothgar,—

“ There was song and social glee and the Scylding gray,
Asking after many tales, told of ancient times.
Whiles, the Lord of War waked the harp's delight,
Greeted the glee wood. Now he told a tale
Sooth and sorrowful; then a story strange
Did the king, big-hearted, sing aright from end to end.
Then again began that grey-headed warrior,
All up-bound with eld, and his heart within him swelled
Now that, old in winters, on it all he thought.
Thus the livelong day lingered we within,
And delight in hall we seized till the dark came on !

Let us hear the minstrel end the song of Beowulf, in the words he chanted, and so end our study,—

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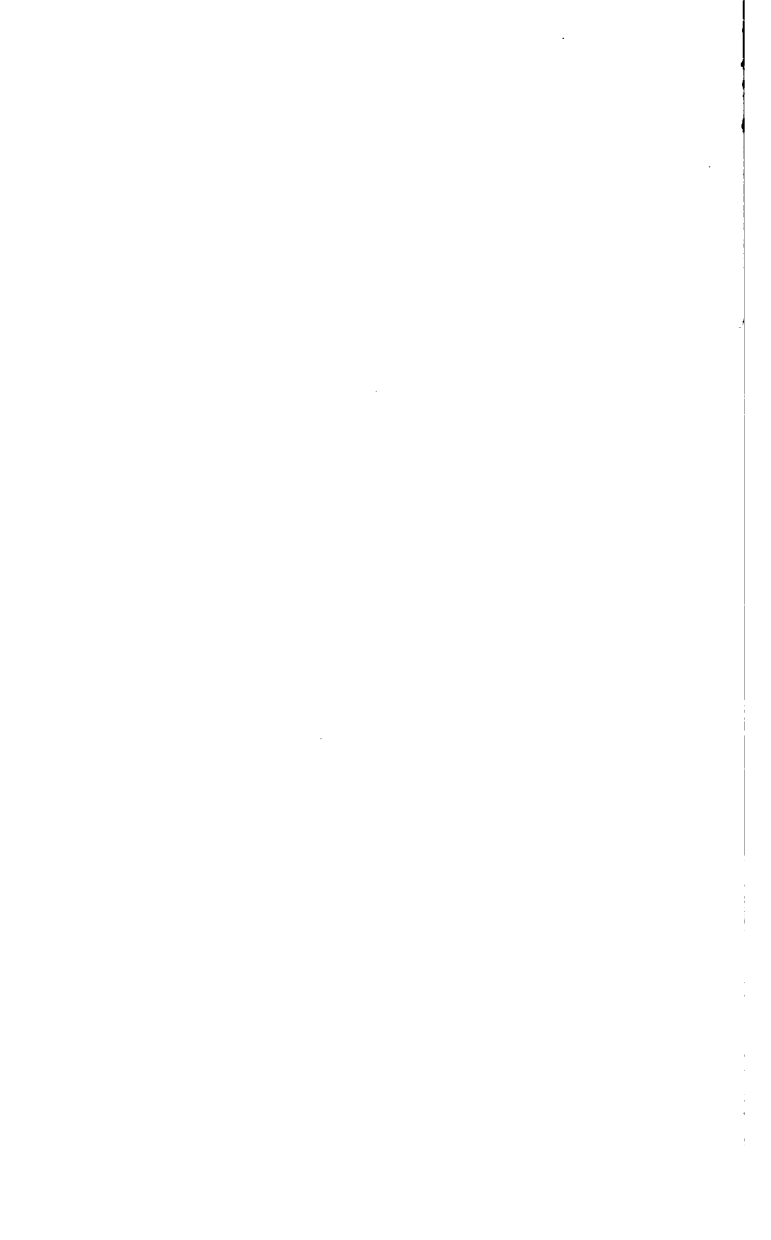
"éahtodan éorlscipe ond his éllenwéorc.
dúguthum dēmdon swa hit ge-dēfe biþ
thaet mon his wine dýfhten wórdum hérge
férhthum fréoge thonne he fóρθ scile
of lic háman laéne weóρθan.
Swá begnórdon Géata léode
hláfordes hryre héorth-genéatas,
cwáedon thaet he waére wórwuld cýninga
mánnas mildust ond món thwáerust
léodum líthost and lóf geórnost."

"Thus, with groaning sorrow, all the Geat folk
All his hearth companions, for their house lord's over-
throw.

Quoth they that he was of the world kings all
Of all men, the mildest, and to men the kindest
To his people gentlest, and of praise the keenest."

THE END.





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